# PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

**SIXTH SERIES—VOLUME 259**

# HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

THIRD SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
FORTY-FOURTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

**SESSION 1994–95**

COMPRISING PERIOD
1 May—11 May 1995

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# THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

## OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE THIRD SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 27 APRIL 1992]

FORTY-FOURTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

**SIXTH SERIES** **VOLUME 259**

**TENTH VOLUME OF SESSION 1994–95**


# House of Commons

*Monday 1 May 1995*

*The House met at half-past Two o'clock*

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

# Oral Answers to Questions

## SOCIAL SECURITY

### Social Security Card

1. **Mr. Legg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to introduce a social security card for the payment of benefits. [20116]

**The Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Peter Lilley):** Last year, I announced plans to automate the payment of benefits at post offices. Order books and girocheques will be phased out and replaced by a benefit payment card for all claimants who wish to be paid via a post office. That will help to eliminate fraud, reduce costs for taxpayers, be more secure for customers and support the future of the post office network.

**Mr. Legg:** Can my right hon. Friend confirm that, over the next three years, he will be spending £300 million to help to combat fraud? Can he also confirm that combating fraud effectively will help to ensure that benefits can continue to be paid through post offices?

**Mr. Lilley:** My hon. Friend is correct. I have obtained agreement from the Treasury to spend extra money on preventing fraud. We believe that that will save substantial amounts of money for the taxpayer and ensure that the money goes where it should—to those in genuine need. That is in addition to the investment that we hope for in the new payments system, which is of the order of £130 million. We hope to involve private finance in developing that operation.

**Mr. Frank Field:** What is the point of issuing the new cards when large numbers of people, often working in gangs, are wrongly claiming benefit? How many spare national insurance numbers are there? What action is the right hon. Gentleman going to take to prevent the use of any of the millions of spare national insurance numbers for fraudulent claims?

**Mr. Lilley:** The cards will, I hope, directly eliminate the sort of fraud that the hon. Gentleman mentions. He is correct to say that gangs of people steal order books and then impersonate their owners. Order books are one of the least secure means of payment.

Once we have a payment card and post offices are directly linked to the central source of information, this form of fraud and abuse will be virtually eliminated, with a saving of about £150 million to the taxpayer. We are in the process of cleaning up the national insurance number system to make it more effective. It is true that a number of people who have emigrated or died still have their numbers on the system, but they are not, for that reason, available for anyone to use.

**Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman:** Would my right hon. Friend care to commend my local office, which spotted a slight inconsistency about a gentleman who claimed to be incapacitated but who managed to drive up in a jazzy sports car to collect benefit? He was today convicted in Preston Crown court of defrauding the system of £60,000.

**Mr. Lilley:** I am sure that the whole House will welcome the detection of that abuse of the system. We are introducing a more objective system of evaluating whether people are fit to work. If they are fit to work, they will be helped back into work through back-to-work

benefits; if they are unfit, they will receive the new incapacity benefit, which we want to go to those who are genuinely medically unable to work.

**Mr. Bennett:** Given the large number of people whose credit cards are stolen, what steps will the right hon. Gentleman take to enable people who lose their cards to get their payments quickly without having to go through a bureaucratic process that will cause them further distress?

**Mr. Lilley:** That is an important aspect. The consortia competing to bring in the system have been narrowed down to five. They are making their detailed proposals. One aspect for which they have to ensure that they have the best possible arrangements on offer is coping with people who lose their cards or who are unable to go to the post office and want to nominate a relative or friend to go in their place. All these things have to be done, and done securely.

### Incapacity Benefit

2. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received about the introduction of the new incapacity benefit; and if he will make a statement. [20117]

**The Minister for Social Security and Disabled People (Mr. William Hague):** I have received a number of letters about incapacity benefit since the changes were announced in December 1993. Those changes will target help through a fairer, more objective medical test and provide an affordable and sustainable system of incapacity provision for the future.

**Mr. Thurnham:** Does my hon. Friend agree that we are right to restructure the invalidity benefit system so that those who are genuine claimants will continue to receive benefit and others can be encouraged to return to work? Should that not help to control the ever-rising cost of benefit expenditure?

**Mr. Hague:** Yes, my hon. Friend is right. The old system was well intentioned but inconsistent and haphazard in its application. The new test will focus help on those who are entitled to it. That is what the welfare state is about and that is what the taxpayer is entitled to expect.

**Dr. Reid:** In the representations that the Minister has received, has anyone remarked on the amazing foresight—indeed, the prophetic nature—of the Department? Even before questionnaires have been completed and medical examinations undertaken, the Department suggests that there will be savings of £3.3 billion over three years. How is it that it can make that prediction before medicals have taken place? Is that not illustrative of the fact that the exercise has been led by the Treasury as a cost-cutting measure and is not a system of fair payments for disabilities?

**Mr. Hague:** No. The test is about focusing help on those who need it most and are entitled to it. Of course there are estimates of savings. We believe that there will be savings because we know that the old system was inconsistent and haphazard in its application. Everyone knows that except those in the Labour party.

**Mr. Alan Howarth:** I note the Government's intention next year to refer to placing, assessment and counselling teams the 29,000 people who, it is anticipated, will fail to qualify for incapacity benefit and will therefore sign on and claim the jobseeker's allowance. What plans do the Government have to provide advice and help to another 120,000, on the Government's estimate, who have degrees of disability, will not be eligible for incapacity benefit and will be required to seek work actively if they are to be able to claim benefit?

**Mr. Hague:** I can assure my hon. Friend that the Employment Service will be ready to provide the full range of its usual help to anyone who has been receiving invalidity benefit but is not eligible for incapacity benefit. I draw his attention to the improvements that we are making in the disability working allowance system for the many disabled people who want to work and are able to do so. The improvement will bring considerable benefits to many people.

**Ms Lynne:** I have no doubt that the Minister has received representations from citizens advice bureaux throughout the country, along with the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux. Where will the Government find extra funding for citizens advice bureaux so that they can cope with the increased work load due to the devastating effect that the introduction of incapacity benefit has had on many people?

**Mr. Hague:** Incapacity benefit will not have a devastating effect. It is about focusing entitlement on those who are medically incapable of work. The Government have a most constructive relationship with citizens advice bureaux, and I am confident that that will continue.

### Fraud

3. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what progress he is currently making in combating fraudulent claims. [20119]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. James Arbuthnot):** The fight against fraud remains a top priority. Some £645 million was saved in 1993-94 due to direct action by fraud staff. This was an increase of 17 per cent. on both the previous year's figures, and the target set for the year.

**Mr. Arnold:** My hon. Friend will know that there are few things that anger the British people more than the activities of rip-off merchants who fraudulently take the money of the British taxpayer. [Hon. Members: "Oh!"] It seems that that does not worry Opposition Members, but my constituents consider such rip-off activities a disgrace. That is why my constituents, along with people throughout the country, congratulate the Government on the work that has already been done to reduce fraud. What work is being done to harness computer technology and modern payment systems to ensure that fraud is further driven back?

**Mr. Arbuthnot:** My hon. Friend is right. It is of great concern throughout the country that some people defraud the social security system. That is why we are determined to squeeze fraud out of the system altogether so that it is not there for us to catch. We shall be concentrating on the electronic stop-notice system, which is already doing valuable work in London. We shall be increasing the use of data matching. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary

of State has said, we shall be introducing benefit payment cards as well as increasing the number of highly targeted visits. These measures will be effective in reducing and eliminating fraud.

**Mr. Mike O'Brien:** Given the Secretary of State's miserable failure to answer the question asked by the Chairman of the Social Security Select Committee, will the Minister now confirm that there are about 15 million spare national insurance numbers, and give an undertaking that the availability of those numbers for fraud will be dealt with by the Government, because his right hon. Friend does not seem to be able to give an answer?

**Mr. Arbuthnot:** I am not entirely sure that the hon. Gentleman understands the question that he has just asked. A large number of national insurance numbers are in existence, partly because when somebody dies it may well be necessary to keep a number in existence to allow a pension that is payable as a result of it to continue to be payable. Perhaps he does not understand his question.

### Family Credit

4. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the latest estimate of the number of families receiving family credit. [20120]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Alistair Burt):** In July 1994, 572,000 families were receiving family credit. Figures for October 1994 will be published later this week.

**Mr. Marshall:** Will my hon. Friend draw a contrast between the policy of the Government, who are helping 572,000 families with low incomes, and the policy of another party, which is determined to create mass unemployment among the low-paid by introducing a national minimum wage? Does he expect it to recant on that policy on the road to Sedgefield?

**Mr. Burt:** I do not see why my hon. Friend should be shy about it. I think that he should name the Labour party as the party determined to bring in a minimum wage, which would destroy jobs. The great difference between us is that, while the Labour party remains obsessed with the level of benefits, we are equally concerned about the level of benefit dependency. Whereas our policies take people off benefits, the Labour party's policies would return people to them.

**Mr. Corbyn:** Would the Minister care to tell us what studies have been done by his Department on how much family credit could be saved by the introduction of a national minimum wage of £4.10 per hour and what the effect would be on the poverty levels of a large number of people who have to rely not just on family credit but on other benefits, because the wages paid—often by multinational corporations—are so disgracefully low? Indeed, in some cases they are actually falling.

**Mr. Burt:** The average payment for family credit at the moment is some £48 a week, which, as I said earlier, goes to some half a million families. As to studies, I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman would not rather rely on the judgment of the deputy leader of the Labour party, who said straightforwardly that a minimum wage policy would cost jobs. That seems to me a good enough study.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** Does my hon. Friend agree that the time in people's lives when they are most likely to be poor is when they have their first child and move, normally from two incomes, two mouths to feed, to one income, three mouths to feed? Will he commit the Government to continue to pay child benefit as a way of ensuring that only one household in 12 needs family income support?

**Mr. Burt:** Child benefit remains a cornerstone of our support for families. The commitment was in the manifesto. The policy of the Government since that time has shown that we care very much about ensuring that the poorest families have the greatest support, which is why the 1988 reforms have produced £1 billion-worth of benefits, which are going to the poorest families in the country. That is £1 billion more than there would have been but for those reforms.

### Invalidity Benefit

5. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are his estimates of the impact of changes in invalidity benefit payment arrangements on individual areas of the United Kingdom. [20121]

**Mr. Hague:** Estimates about the effects of the introduction of incapacity benefit are derived from national data and therefore cannot be broken down regionally with reliable accuracy.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** The operative word being "reliable", of course. The data can be broken down if the Government want to. Notwithstanding the considerable distress that is felt by individuals who are being switched from invalidity benefit to incapacity benefit, why did the Government not measure—in areas such as my own in west Cumbria—the economic impact in terms of job losses and business closures as a result of the introduction of incapacity benefit? Has it not yet dawned on Ministers that a very large amount of money is being paid in invalidity benefit in areas of declining industry, where health is poor, and that the removal of much of that money from the local economy will have a major economic impact on areas such as mine?

**Mr. Hague:** The hon. Gentleman should bear in mind two points. First, the forecast national savings are savings in relation to what would have been spent, rather than in relation to the current spending level. Secondly, the hon. Gentleman, and all Labour Members, should remember that increases in spending mean increases in taxation, which also takes money out of the local economy and the economy across the nation. Labour Members never seem to think about the number of businesses that that closes, and the number of job losses that it causes.

### Jobseekers Bill

6. **Mr. Spring:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the projected savings from the passing of the Jobseekers Bill; and if he will make a statement. [20122]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Roger Evans):** The direct benefit

savings are projected to be around £270 million in a full year. However, that figure takes no account of success in getting people back to work earlier.

**Mr. Spring:** Does my hon. Friend agree that, apart from the financial considerations, there is also a moral aspect? Does not the taxpayer need to be protected from those who are not genuinely seeking work, and is that not precisely what the Bill will achieve?

**Mr. Evans:** Yes. The provisions for a jobseeker's agreement and direction are focused on that specific problem.

### Habitual Residence Test

7. **Mr. Timms:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many appeals there have been against refusal of benefit under the habitual residence test; and how many appeals have resulted in an award of benefit. [20123]

**Mr. Lilley:** The independent tribunal service records appeals according to the relevant benefit, not according to the reason for refusal. How many income support appeals refer to habitual residence is therefore not known.

**Mr. Timms:** The Secretary of State will be aware that, in an Adjournment debate on 21 March, the Under-Secretary, the hon. Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans), told the House that the information was available. I do not blame him for that error, which exemplifies the enormous amount of confusion that there has been in both his Department and the Benefits Agency over the test since its introduction.

Is the Secretary of State aware of anecdotal evidence that at least half, and possibly two thirds, of appeals against refusal of benefit under the habitual residence test are successful? Does that not confirm that there are severe problems with the test, and does the right hon. Gentleman accept that the information for which I have asked is basic data that the House needs to make a proper evaluation of this deeply flawed legislation?

**Mr. Lilley:** I know that the hon. Gentleman has taken a sincere and continuing interest in the subject, and I respect him for that, but I do not necessarily accept all his analyses. Adjudication officers' decisions are not themselves law-making; only when they reach the commissioners do they determine the position, and become precedents elsewhere. We shall have to wait a while before any of them do that.

The courts have, however, upheld the validity of the test as a whole. I think that the House will welcome the fact that we have acted to prevent benefit tourism, thereby saving the taxpayer considerable sums. Opposition Members always resist any changes that we introduce to prevent abuse of this kind: they are out of touch with the British people in that regard, as in so many others.

**Mrs. Roe:** I welcome the habitual residence test. May I urge my right hon. Friend to clamp down on bogus asylum seekers? Is he aware of the recent case of the Algerian asylum seeker, Mr. Abeey Dikes, who, on the tube, kicked and head-butted a young doctor? Does he agree that people like Mr. Dikes should not be able to stay in this country at the taxpayer's expense?

**Mr. Lilley:** It is not for me to comment on individual cases, but I am aware of the outrage that is caused when people abuse this country's hospitality, either by committing crimes when they are being supported here or by obtaining support to which they are not entitled. We shall do all in our power to prevent both abuses.

**Mr. Bradley:** I thank the Under-Secretary for correcting his statement in the Adjournment debate that he had supplied me with figures showing the number of people who had won appeals. In a written answer, he confirmed that he had not made that information available. That is not good enough, however: we need to know how many British citizens have been denied their entitlement to income support through the habitual residence test.

As the Secretary of State is able to provide me with figures for every office in the country showing the number of people who have been denied benefit through the test, will he now supply me with the number of people whose benefits have been started again because they have won their appeals against the test?

**Mr. Lilley:** I shall certainly see whether such information is available, but I fear that it may not be. Obviously, information that comes directly from the independent tribunal service is normally provided by the service, and I do not think that it would be cost-effective to try to produce the records that the hon. Gentleman proposes.

There will be a number of appeals. Some will be successful; some will fail. An appeal mechanism is an essential part of our system—a proper safety net whose existence we should welcome, rather than counting it as a failure when an appeal succeeds.

### Pensioner Households (Consumer Goods)

8. **Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many pensioner households had (a) a fridge, (b) a car, (c) a freezer, (d) a telephone and (e) a television in 1979; and how many do today. [20125]

**Mr. Burt:** In 1979, some 88 per cent. of pensioners had access to a fridge; by 1991-92, the latest year for which information is available, that figure had climbed to 99 per cent. In 1979, 34 per cent. had access to a car; 49 per cent. now have access to one. In 1979, some 32 per cent. had access to a freezer or fridge-freezer; 75 per cent. now have access to one. In 1979, some 57 per cent. had access to a telephone; 92 per cent. now have access to one. In 1979, some 96 per cent. had access to a television; 99 per cent now have access to one.

**Mr. Brazier:** Do not those practical examples illustrate how wealth has trickled up from the general economy to retired people? Is it not easy to forget the plight of so many retired people in earlier generations, including those who lived under the previous Government, who saw the retirement living standards, which they had worked so hard to save for and hoped for, destroyed by the scourge of inflation, which this Government have overcome?

**Mr. Burt:** The most significant finding from studies on low income shows how the income of pensioners as a group has come out of the bottom decile of income in a manner unprecedented before the Government came into office. Pensioners are increasing their income through occupational pensions and the like, but, as my hon. Friend

said, they remain vulnerable to policies that would produce inflation—policies advocated by Opposition Members. I see no answer in new Labour to old inflation.

**Mr. Wicks:** Lest this question is designed to produce complacency, will the Minister tell the House how many pensioners paid VAT on fuel in 1979 and how many do so today? Will he explain why more old people die in the winter in this country than in any European country for which figures are available?

**Mr. Burt:** Labour Members persist in presenting the image of the pensioner as a dependent person. When will they appreciate that pensioners are fitter than they were before, live longer than they did before, have more varied interests in their leisure time, and are making a substantial contribution to the voluntary sector and society? The Government cater for the poorer pensioner by reforms introduced in 1988. We have been able to put in £1 billion in extra support to the poorest. I should remind the hon. Gentleman that the VAT compensation package was higher than that suggested even by his Front-Bench team.

**Mr. Congdon:** Does my hon. Friend agree that his figures demonstrate the success of occupational pensions in enhancing living standards for the elderly, and that we need to do even more to encourage more people to put money into occupational pensions for their retirement?

**Mr. Burt:** My hon. Friend is right. The picture continues in the United Kingdom of pensioners being much more reflective of society as a whole, with a variety of different incomes and statuses. The Government seek to encourage those aspirations. We recognise that, when people retire, they still retain aspirations in life. We want to fuel those aspirations; we do not want pensioners to be bracketed as a group that is continually dependent on the rest of society. Pensioners are not, and they do not deserve to be because they have worked for us.

**Mr. Winnick:** Is the Minister aware that some 25 per cent. of all single pensioners have an income of less than £70 a week, and that is before housing cost? Does not that information, which was given to me in a parliamentary reply, illustrate the scale of pensioner poverty? Despite all that the Minister has said, the fact that so many pensioners are living on such low incomes should embarrass the Government. It is undoubtedly a factor in why so many people conclude that the only group that the Government are really concerned about is the rich and the prosperous. They could not give a damn about the millions of pensioners who live in poverty.

**Mr. Burt:** I do not know why the hon. Gentleman ignores the information that, since 1979, the total average income of pensioners has increased by 50 per cent., which is faster than the rate of growth in the population as a whole. He must have his own motives.

In seeking to protect the poorer pensioner, the Government are ensuring that, through our reforms in social security, we put money where it is most needed. At the same time, we have encouraged the pensioners to make contributions for themselves, and that is reflected in the growth in income over the years.

The hon. Gentleman never apologises for the damage done by the Labour Government to the pensioners during 1974 to 1979, when not only was their income robbed by inflation, but his Government presided over a one-third cut in capital spending on the national health service—a service that we have built up to support all pensioners. Instead of displaying incredulity and arrogance in the way that he puts his questions, when will the hon. Gentleman apologise for what his Government did to pensioners?

**Mr. Nigel Evans:** Does my hon. Friend agree that central to our belief that the quality of life of our pensioners must improve is our intention that their real spending power should also improve? Does he agree that, between 1974 and 1979, one of the tragedies to befall our pensioners was that those who had put income to one side for their future saw the real value of that money halved by inflation? Will my hon. Friend give a commitment today that the Government will ensure that inflation is kept to a minimum to preserve the real value of pensioners' money?

**Mr. Burt:** Yes. The House and the country know that the Government have pledged to keep inflation low. We have pledged to follow policies that will keep down inflation. If the country thinks that a return to the inflation policies of the Labour party will benefit anyone, it is sadly mistaken. I do not believe that the country will make such an error of judgment.

### Social Fund Funeral Payments

9. **Mr. Kevin Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he intends to publish the report by the Social Security Advisory Committee on the proposed limit to social fund funeral payments and the Government's response to that report. [20126]

**Mr. Lilley:** I am considering the Social Security Advisory Committee's report and I will lay the report, and my response to it, before the House shortly.

**Mr. Hughes:** Is the right hon. Gentleman aware of the huge regional variations in the cost of a funeral? Today, I telephoned round my constituency and the cheapest funeral I could find cost in excess of £1,000. Will the right hon. Gentleman now consider scrapping the national limit of £875? Has he no sympathy for the bereaved families on low incomes, or is it just another cynical attempt to raise funds so that the Government can cut taxes before the next election?

**Mr. Lilley:** I am aware of the differences across the country in the fees for cremation and, in particular, burial and I want to take that into account in the examination that I am currently conducting. The hon. Gentleman should recognise that the number of claims for social fund funeral payments has doubled over the past six years and the amount spent has trebled. Therefore, it is only right that we should take action to prevent abuse. Indeed, we have already taken action to stop people seeking a distant relative on income support to make the application. I thought that we had the support of the Opposition in that measure. Are they now withdrawing it?

**Mr. Dewar:** Is the right hon. Gentleman seriously maintaining that the growth in the number of funeral grants is the result of abuse, lead swinging and fraud? Is it not rather a direct reflection of the growth in poverty over the past few years?

Can we take it from the parliamentary answer to the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) on 5 April that the £875 ceiling—a figure that is below

the mean and the median award in the previous financial year—is now being abandoned? Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that the one essential test for any replacement scheme is that it genuinely allows for a dignified funeral for a bereaved family facing difficult circumstances?

**Mr. Lilley:** Since we took steps to ensure that the nearest relatives or friends with a genuine connection with the deceased undertook the funeral—rather than distant people brought in purely for the purpose of ensuring eligibility for grants—the growth in claims has stopped almost overnight. The hon. Gentleman may wish to withdraw his support for that measure, in common with the Opposition's usual practice of not taking any steps to ensure that money goes to those who are genuinely in need.

Conservatives want to ensure that those in receipt of income support can give their relatives a proper, dignified funeral, but we do not want to see the money wasted under the method to which the hon. Gentleman seems to wish to return.

### Occupational Pensions

10. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of retired people had occupational pensions in 1979 and 1994; and if he will make a statement. [20128]

**Mr. Arbuthnot:** In 1979, 43 per cent. of people over state pension age had an income from an occupational pension. By 1992, the latest year for which figures are available, that proportion had increased to 60 per cent.

**Mr. Dunn:** Will the Minister confirm that the Government's encouragement of occupational pensions has helped to achieve a 50 per cent. increase in pensioners' average net incomes since 1979? Will he further confirm that measures in the Pensions Bill, against which the Labour party voted, will help to make occupational pensions more secure in future?

**Mr. Arbuthnot:** Yes. Our policy is to encourage private pension provision, the money from which goes into industry and into creating assets to build up pensions for the future. Last Monday, however, in its reasoned amendment, the Labour party voted not to give the Pensions Bill a Second Reading. It voted to deny pensioners the security that the Bill will provide, it voted to deny women the equality that the Bill will provide and it voted to deny the entire country of the choice that the Bill will provide, yet Labour Members pose as the friends of pensioners.

**Mr. Ingram:** Everyone would welcome the growth in the number of people in receipt of occupational pensions, but will not many millions of our fellow citizens, who will become pensioners in the years ahead, be dependent on the state earnings-related pension scheme to supplement their pension income? Does the Minister accept the assessment of the Government Actuary that the proposed changes to SERPs in the Pensions Bill—the very Bill that he is defending—will substantially reduce people's supplementary pension income, with a total reduction of more than £9 billion by 2050? Will he give detailed figures assessing the effects of those changes on individual entitlement at the time of retirement?

**Mr. Arbuthnot:** Today is Labour Day and this is new Labour speaking. It surprises me that Labour has decided to attack a reduction in state spending in the light of its new Labour image on Saturday. It also surprises me that Labour dares to say anything about pensions, as it will not even tell the country whether, if it were in office, it would uprate pensions by prices or by earnings. It is necessary, as I have said before, to improve and increase private pension provision. One of the reasons why there will be a reduction in SERPs is that so many people will be going into private pension provision over the next 20, 30 or 40 years.

**Dr. Spink:** Will my hon. Friend confirm that occupational pensioners have seen an increase of about two thirds in the amount, on average, that they receive from their occupational pensions since 1979? Will he also confirm that the very poorest pensioners, who probably do not receive occupational pensions, will from April this year, as a couple, receive a minimum of £100 a week, with all their housing costs being paid? Does not that show how the Government care for the welfare of poor pensioners?

**Mr. Arbuthnot:** My hon. Friend is right. On average, newly retiring pensioners have an occupational pension of about £100 a week over and above the state retirement pension.

### Disabled People (Civil Rights)

12. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what recent meetings he has had with disabled people to discuss civil rights questions. [20130]

**Mr. Hague:** I have met, and shall continue to meet, disabled people and members of their organisations to discuss a wide variety of issues.

**Mr. Skinner:** Is the Minister aware that on Friday hundreds of disabled people—some in wheelchairs, some on sticks—came to Parliament hoping to see the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill pass its Committee stage and be passed into law? They were met by a stony-faced Government who swamped the Bill in Committee with more than 100 amendments, many of which the Minister was responsible for. The net result was that those people were turned away at the gates and the Government kicked their crutches away. No wonder the people out there treat this Government with contempt.

**Mr. Hague:** Later this year, disabled people will have a great deal to celebrate because the Disability Discrimination Bill, which has been passed by the House and is now in another place, will spell the end of discrimination against disabled people in this country. It is a Conservative Government who will have placed on the statute book a working piece of comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation.

### Elderly People (Residential Care)

13. **Ms Coffey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people living in residential or nursing home care are being supported financially

by his Department; and if he will forecast the number he expects to be in these categories in three, five and 10 years' time. [20132]

**Mr. Roger Evans:** The latest figures show that 280,000 people in residential care or nursing homes are being supported financially by my Department through income support, either through preserved rights to higher limits or through income support, including residential allowance. In three, five and 10 years' time, the figures are estimated to be 294,000, 303,000 and 327,000.

**Ms Coffey:** Is the Minister aware that, in Stockport, residential grant from the Department of Social Security is £30 lower than the grant available from the local authority to people who were admitted to residential and nursing care after 1993? Is he further aware that that is causing enormous problems in respect of the personal allowances being used by elderly people to top up that grant, and that relatives, who can ill afford it, are having to contribute? Will the Minister review the DSS grant to bring it into line with the actual charges of care and so prevent some of the humiliation and distress to my constituents? After all, it is not their fault that the Government have privatised health care for the elderly.

**Mr. Evans:** Of course the income support limits under preserved rights are reviewed annually. The limits have risen substantially in real terms since 1985. In nursing homes, the rise is 38 per cent. and for the elderly in residential care homes the rise is 16 per cent. in real terms. However, no Government could meet all fees, however high. In many parts of the country, fees are as high as £1,000 a week.

## DUCHY OF LANCASTER

### Special Advisers

27. **Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what consultations he has recently had on the terms of appointment, and pay of, special advisers to Departments. [20146]

**The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. David Hunt):** None.

**Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that special advisers have highly unusual terms and conditions of service? Not only are their salaries arbitrarily linked to the remuneration that they received before they took their posts, thus causing the ridiculous differential between a merchant banker and an academic, but there is no scope for performance-related pay thereafter. Of more concern, perhaps, is the fact that about 50 per cent. of special advisers earn more than the Ministers they advise. Is it not about time that this ludicrous situation was sorted out?

**Mr. Hunt:** My hon. Friend makes a number of important points on an area of responsibility that passed from my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer to me and my Department last month. I should be grateful if my hon. Friend could give me time to ponder the significance of some of them. I will then certainly consider reviewing the policy in the way that he has suggested.

**Mr. Madden:** Will the Chancellor find out whether there is a special adviser at the Department of Employment? If there is, will he send him or her to my constituency to find out why and how the Allerton outreach team has had such remarkable success in placing unemployed people in jobs and full-time training? Will the adviser then go back to London and persuade the Secretary of State for Employment to ensure that the team's funding, which has come from the Department over the past few months, is continued so that its remarkable success may continue and the unemployment toll in my constituency be significantly reduced?

**Mr. Hunt:** I will raise with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment the points that the hon. Gentleman has made, but I hope that he will recognise that there has been a significant fall in the number of unemployed people in this country, with 1,000 people coming off the dole every day for the past two years. It is about time that Opposition Members realised the facts, which are appreciated widely throughout the country: that the Government are responsible for the economic policies that are reducing the rate of unemployment.

### Institute of Virology

28. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what response he is sending to the representations he has received concerning the dismissal of the director of the Institute of Virology in Oxford by the Natural Environment Research Council; and if he will make a statement. [20147]

**The Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service and Science (Mr. John Horam):** This is a matter for the Natural Environment Research Council, under its royal supplemental charter. However, I am aware of the hon. Gentleman's concern about this matter, and I will write to him shortly.

**Mr. Dalyell:** Is a perfunctory three days to clear one's desk and leave really an acceptable response to an internationally distinguished scientist on whose personal behaviour there is no blemish? Is that really the way in which the NERC should behave?

**Mr. Horam:** As the hon. Gentleman knows, at the bottom of the dispute is a difference of view about future research between the Institute of Virology and the NERC. The matter was discussed over a year, and an independent review came down on the side of the NERC. It was impossible to resolve the dispute, and Professor Bishop, the director, was given six months' notice and quite a generous package. It was clearly impossible to continue on the wrong direction for research, so he received three days' notice. None the less, I assure the hon. Gentleman that no aspersion is cast on the ability of Professor Bishop, who remains a distinguished and eminent virologist.

### Government Policy

29. **Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what additional measures are required to improve the co-ordination and effective presentation of Government policy. [20148]

**Mr. David Hunt:** We are always looking at ways of doing even better.

**Mr. Prentice:** Will the Chancellor comment on reports in this morning's *The Guardian* that he is a leading doubter of the wisdom of rail privatisation and that he

wants to see it shelved this side of the election because the policy is too difficult to sell to the general public? Is there any truth in that? What are the presentational advantages, supposed or otherwise, of the privatisation of Nuclear Electric?

**Mr. Hunt:** I am very happy immediately to tell the hon. Gentleman that there is no foundation to those reports; they are groundless and incorrect. As for the hon. Gentleman's general point, the concept of privatisation has swept the world, with the sole exception of the Labour party. There is an international queue at the Government's door asking how to go about the privatisation process and how to go about improving public services. Privatisation and the citizens charter are the tip of a formidable iceberg. All that I will say about Labour councils and the Labour party is that the Labour party is heading for that iceberg.

**Mr. Dunn:** As the Labour party finds it hard to distinguish fact from fiction, does my right hon. Friend agree that the red rose party is the red nose party—a party of comic relief?

**Mr. Hunt:** I am very grateful that my hon. Friend gives me an opportunity to reiterate that what we respect in the House of Commons—in this Chamber—is the fact that politics should be about policies, not about soundbites. It is about time that the Labour party learnt that lesson.

**Mr. Pike:** As the people of this country will once again show their view of the Government's policies on Thursday, and as the Chancellor is responsible for the presentation of Government policy, is he or the Prime Minister to be blamed for the Government's failures?

**Mr. Hunt:** The hon. Gentleman has forgotten once again that at the last general election the Conservative party secured a larger number of votes than any political party had ever secured before. It is about time that the hon. Gentleman remembered that.

## Charters

30. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans he has to introduce further charters; and if he will make a statement. [20150]

**Mr. Horam:** New charters for further and higher education in Northern Ireland will be published later this year, as well as revised charters for council tenants and court users. A revised contributors charter for national insurance payers was published last week.

**Mr. Greenway:** I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. Will he confirm that British Gas has been put on probation for a year in relation to its charter mark—it could be taken away if it does not improve—and that that is an excellent use of charter marks? Will he further confirm that, despite its endless hollow boasting, the Labour party will never qualify for a charter mark?

**Mr. Horam:** I entirely agree with my hon. Friend, and he is particularly right in the light of the press releases that Labour has released today on consumers. The point about charter marks is that they are designed to be the Oscars of public service, and a mark of quality for someone who is doing well. It does not matter whether we are talking about British Gas or a local library—if it does not live up to its promises, it should have its charter mark removed. British Gas has another nine months to come up to the mark. If it does not do so, we will take its mark away.

**Mr. Henderson:** Does the Minister accept that if bosses of utilities such as British Gas cannot self-regulate their snouts out of the trough, someone else must protect the public interest? Does he further agree that there is a need to revise the legislation that governs the powers of the regulator in gas and in other utilities so that the regulator can intervene where bosses fail to meet acceptable public standards in pay and conditions, which may be true of British Gas?

**Mr. Horam:** The Labour party would wrap everything up in more regulation and red tape. The hon. Gentleman does not seem to be aware that this matter is being considered by the Greenbury committee. Members on both sides of the House would wish to support the purpose of charter marks, which is to improve the quality of public services. As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy said with regard to privatisation, the Government are ahead of every other Government in the world in improving public service.

## Foresight Process

31. **Mrs. Gillan:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many representations he has received from industry scientists and other interested parties during the foresight process. [20151]

**Mr. David Hunt:** A great many. The technology foresight programme has been based on very extensive consultation, reaching out to more than 10,000 people through the work of panels, conferences, seminars, surveys and workshops.

**Mrs. Gillan:** I congratulate my right hon. Friend on what must be the most thorough and comprehensive consultation process that has ever taken place on science research and development in this country, which will result in the identification of opportunities in markets for our businesses in the next 10 or 20 years. When will the process be completed, and when will the entire foresight programme be drawn together by the steering group? When we can expect some action plans?

**Mr. Hunt:** We expect to publish the final report in the second half of this month, and we are responding to many of the reports with new research programmes. For example, the programme on applied biocatalysis, which I announced at the relaunch of the LINK programme on 14 March, focuses on a generic theme spotlighted by three of the foresight panels. The Government will contribute £4 million to the programme, with matching funds coming from industry. I agree with my hon. Friend that the 15 reports on technology foresight in "Progress Through Partnership" are examples of a programme that is beating the rest of the world. We intend to follow up that programme with clear initiatives that respond to the imaginative ideas that have been put forward.

**Dr. Bray:** Is the Chancellor of the Duchy aware that many of the recommendations of the foresight panels go far beyond the laissez faire policies of the Government? Does the right hon. Gentleman have the support of his colleagues in pursuing the recommendations?

**Mr. Hunt:** It would have assisted me had the hon. Gentleman told me to which of the 15 reports he was referring. The President of the Board of Trade and I have announced an extension to the LINK programme, which is determined to follow up many of the initiatives proposed in the panel reports. The whole technology foresight programme has been a remarkable success, and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will join with many others throughout the country in welcoming the reports. We must ensure that the Government and all the relevant parties—in particular, industry—respond in the best way possible.

**Mr. Battle:** I welcome technology foresight in principle, but what is the point of the exercise when the recommendations in the various reports are undermined by the current actions of other Departments? The Department of Transport is privatising the Transport Research Laboratory, which undermines proposals in the transport report. The Department of Trade and Industry is pushing on with the privatisation of AEA Technology, despite the recommendations of the energy foresight report to extend and use our nuclear clean-up expertise. How can the Chancellor and his Department credibly claim to be co-ordinating the Government's science policy when other Ministers are undermining their work day by day? Where is the joined-up thinking?

**Mr. Hunt:** The hon. Gentleman has got the facts wrong again. I have read through the 15 reports. The transport report to which he refers contains some imaginative thinking, to which the Government will respond after very careful thought. As for all Government Departments, we will consider with colleagues how best to respond to the reports. The hon. Gentleman failed to refer to the fact that the science budget, which underpins all this work, reached a record level in the last financial year. In this financial year, the record cash figure of £1,281,675,000 will be spent. That is more than enough to ensure that we follow up many of the recommendations, in partnership with other Departments.

## Citizens Charters

32. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what examples he has of improvements influenced by the citizens charters. [20152]

**Mr. Horam:** Many. They include hospital waiting times, passport applications, first-class letter delivery, driving licence applications, publication of school, police and local authority performance tables and guaranteed minimum standards for gas, water and electricity.

**Mr. Arnold:** Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the spin-offs of the citizens charter is a bringing together of jobcentres and unemployment benefit offices, which ensures that people who are unfortunate enough to be unemployed can receive the full employment services that they need to get back into a job?

**Mr. Horam:** Yes, I am delighted to agree with my hon. Friend. Not only that, but the agencies in question now see 98 per cent. of people within 10 minutes of their going to the office.

**Mr. Flynn:** Under which charter can the people of Wales and England complain on this glorious spring day because they have been denied their traditional May day bank holiday, which is being enjoyed by the lucky people in Scotland? When will the Government stop mucking about with May day?

**Mr. Horam:** I really do not think that we need to keep the red flag flying on this day.

## Engineering

33. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans he has to meet the Institute of Civil Engineering to discuss the role of engineering. [20153]

**Mr. Horam:** In the last year my senior officials met engineering bodies on six occasions. I look forward to continuing this close relationship.

**Mr. Marshall:** In view of the importance of engineering to the economy, can my hon. Friend state that a Minister as well as officials will meet officials of the industry in future?

**Mr. Horam:** Absolutely. My right hon. Friend met engineering institutions three times in January, four times in February and three times in March. I have also met many engineers at all levels of—

**Madam Speaker:** Order. I would be much obliged if the Minister would use the microphone not only so that we can hear him but so that I can see him.

**Mr. Horam:** I was turning away, perhaps out of excessive politeness, to deal with my hon. Friend's question.

The results of yesterday's race at Imola, which Damon Hill won, and the fact that no fewer than nine of the 10 Grand Prix cars used were British-built by British engineering, shows the quality engineering that we have in Britain, which we should support.

**Mrs. Dunwoody:** Would the Minister like to astonish himself on one of the occasions when he or his newly found colleagues address the engineering institutions by recommending some way in which new jobs can be created in engineering so that we might begin to get back to the state in which we compete as engineers and do not have to import other people's goods?

**Mr. Horam:** I am afraid that the hon. Lady is behind the times. Manufacturing in this country has strengthened considerably in the past few years, particularly in vehicle manufacture, which she knows all about in her constituency. Engineering in Britain is on a high now. That is partly as a result of the interest of the Government and partly as a result of the inward investment that the Government have successfully encouraged in the past five or 10 years. The hon. Lady should come up to date.

**Mr. Brandreth:** Will my hon. Friend confirm that, as from next year, technology will be part of the national curriculum for all young people from five to 16 and that over the next three years the Government are committed to putting in an additional £10 million to top up bursaries for top-flight undergraduates studying technology?

**Mr. Horam:** Yes. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for those facts. The Royal Academy of Engineering is getting another £400,000 this year, which will bring up to £2.6 million the contribution that we are making to that body. As a result of science being in the school curriculum for

the first time on a comprehensive basis, about 1.6 million pupils are now taking science subjects at GCSE level. That is more than double the figure of five years ago and is the result of the first group of children coming through the new science curriculum.

### Women's Issues

34. **Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement about the work of the Cabinet Sub-Committee on women's issues in the past year. [20154]

**Mr. David Hunt:** The ministerial Committee on women's issues plays a key role in developing and monitoring policy on issues of special concern to women. As I explained to the House on 7 March, the Government have introduced a range of measures that have improved the position of women in our society.

**Mr. Bayley:** Has the right hon. Gentleman read the Government Actuary's report on the Pensions Bill, which says that in the first year in which the Bill comes fully into force—if it does come into force—pensions paid to women will fall in value at today's prices by £4,600 million in that year alone? Has the Cabinet women's Committee considered the Pensions Bill and the disastrous effect that it will have on women? If so, what advice has it given the Cabinet?

**Mr. Hunt:** The issues that the hon. Gentleman raises are very much matters for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security. Of course the ministerial Committee considers a range of issues affecting the position of women. As we said in the debate on 7 March, we have a very impressive record on ensuring that the position of women in society continues to improve.

## Points of Order

3.31 pm

**Ms Ann Coffey** (Stockport): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I should like to enlist your help on how to proceed with a matter. On 5 April, in response to an oral question, the Minister with responsibility for information and technology said that he had an undertaking from the Cable Communications Association that all schools in the areas for which it has franchises would be connected. I then asked the Minister whether I could see a copy of that undertaking. No such undertaking exists. It is important for the Minister to make the matter clear because this is an important issue. His undertaking is in *Hansard.*

**Madam Speaker:** That is not a point of order for me: it is a matter for argument between the hon. Lady and the Minister. She might care to use the Order Paper to put down more questions or perhaps use an early-day motion to bring the matter to light.

**Mr. John Marshall** (Hendon, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. On Friday the House dealt with a number of private Members' Bills, one of which was the War Crimes (Supplementary Provisions) Bill *[Lords].* A Government Whip and I objected to that Bill, but *Hansard* does not record that fact.

**Madam Speaker:** I will have a look at *Hansard.* I went through it today but I did not see that point in it.

**Mr. Dennis Skinner** (Bolsover): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. On entering Parliament today through St. Stephen's entrance I noticed that the automatic screening apparatus had been removed. Everybody will appreciate that it is necessary to have those security booths intact, but when I inquired, the security people told me that they had removed them all because they had to lay a red carpet for the Queen on Friday. There is a strange language of priorities in this place when people can shift all the screening apparatus for several days to put down a red carpet. I suggest that it is high time the matter was looked into with a view to making sure that people coming into this place are effectively screened, that there is security and that red carpets are not regarded as being as important as security in the Houses of Parliament.

**Madam Speaker:** The hon. Gentleman is usually the first who wishes to dispose of security in this place. I am sure that the House would wish to see a red carpet laid in Westminster Hall for the Queen's visit there on Friday. At the same time there must be a proper balance in terms of security. I am pleased that the hon. Gentleman has been the first to notice this matter and I shall take it up as soon as I leave the Chair.

**Mr. Tam Dalyell** (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Does the presence of a Scottish Office Minister show that there might have been a request for the Scottish Office to make a statement explaining on what basis it gave permission to Shell to sink a terminal structure with arsenic, cadmium and other nasties, which, like the oil sludge, will doubtless end up on the shores of my constituency?

**Madam Speaker:** Not to my knowledge. The Scottish Office Minister is here to deal with the House's business but he will doubtless have noted the point raised by the hon. Gentleman.

**Mrs. Helen Liddell** (Monklands, East): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I seek your advice on a question that relates to two different Departments. You will be aware of the outcry in the country about hospital closures, which has now been underscored by the work done by my right hon. Friend the shadow health spokesman, who today revealed that 304 hospitals have closed in Britain and that 34 of those are in Scotland—

**Madam Speaker:** Order. As the hon. Lady will appreciate, I cannot deal with policy matters. I can deal only with points of order that affect our Standing Orders and procedures, so perhaps she will come straight to those.

**Mrs. Liddell:** I seek your advice on how to proceed with getting a statement, not just from the Secretary of State for Health, given her coyness on these matters, but, as this relates to the closure of 34 hospitals in Scotland, from the Minister responsible for health in Scotland, who sits in another place.

**Madam Speaker:** The hon. Lady could do a number of things. She could ask the shadow Leader of the House to press for a statement; seek an Adjournment debate through me on a Wednesday or a weekday evening; or use the Order Paper for early-day motions or parliamentary questions.

**Mr. Phil Gallie** (Ayr): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** There are no further points of order now that I have given the answer requested by the hon. Lady. She asked for my advice and I have given my best advice.

**Ms Glenda Jackson** (Hampstead and Highgate): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I, too, should be grateful for your advice on how to proceed. A report in today's edition of *The Times* highlights the fact that an all-party group of Back Benchers has produced a draft report for the Transport Select Committee which says that, despite the Government's arguments to the contrary, subsidy will still be needed for at least a decade if the railways are privatised. As the Department of Transport consistently hides behind commercial confidentiality to avoid answering those issues—

**Madam Speaker:** Order. The hon. Lady knows full well that that is a matter not for me but for the Committee. I never comment on newspaper reports—it is very foolish so to do.

**Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody** (Crewe and Nantwich): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I ask for your support because I am worried about the growing habit in the House, which is a grave discourtesy to yourself and the Chair: the continuing inability of Ministers and others on the Front Bench to address the Chair. It happens not only on the Floor of the House but in Committee. Many of us are worried about the new habit of referring not to Her Majesty's Opposition or Her Majesty's Government but only to the names of the political parties of those

*[Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody]*

concerned. If that is to be so, are we now to abandon any reference to the Government and refer to them by their doubtful title of "the Conservative party"?

**Madam Speaker:** The hon. Lady is a long-standing and respected Member of the House. She is quite right. I find it very disagreeable when hon. Members refer to political parties. They should refer to Her Majesty's Government or Opposition.

**Mr. George Foulkes** (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) *rose—*

**Madam Speaker:** Order. I am on my feet. I must be allowed to answer one point at a time.

The hon. Lady is correct, too, to say that when Ministers and others appear at the Dispatch Box, they often turn to and answer the person concerned, believing it to be polite. They should speak through the Chair because, not only do I want them to be heard through the microphone but there is the occasional handsome face which I should like to see. I am pleased that the hon. Lady has raised this matter. It is one of the more genuine points of order, which I see is sparking off many new ones.

**Mr. Gallie** *rose—*

**Madam Speaker:** I hope that this is a new point and does not relate to Scottish health.

**Mr. Gallie:** On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Having listened to the advice given to the hon. Member for Monklands, East (Mrs. Liddell), I, too, wish to register concern. What advice can you give me with respect to finding out how much money has been transferred in Scotland from the health service to local authorities for community care?

**Madam Speaker:** I refer to my earlier answer to the hon. Lady.

**Mr. Patrick McLoughlin** (West Derbyshire): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms Jackson) has left. She raised a point of order with you and quickly went out of the Chamber. When hon. Members rise to speak on matters in which they have an interest, they have to declare it, but the hon. Lady did not declare her interest on that point of order. Would it not be a courtesy to the House for hon. Members who are sponsored by unions to make that clear when they are raising points of order?

**Madam Speaker:** The House has never required hon. Members when they ask questions—and a point of order is a method of asking a question—to declare an interest. But I must say, on points of order, that there are far too many of them and that most of them—99.9 per cent. of them—are bogus points of order, disingenuous points of argument, points of frustration and points of politics. I ask hon. Members, before they raise points of order in future, to make sure that they are raising genuine points of order. I hope that that has been a shot across the bow of the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes).

**Mr. Foulkes:** Good afternoon, Madam Speaker. I hesitate to rise on a point of order, but earlier my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) said that today is a bank holiday in Scotland. Manifestly it is not one for everybody but, seriously, there is a great deal of confusion in Scotland and, indeed, in the whole United Kingdom, about how and by whom bank holidays are designated. That creates many problems for conditions of service. I seek your advice on to whom to direct this question, because it is not clear who is responsible for the total chaos and confusion over bank holidays.

**Madam Speaker:** I can tell the hon. Gentleman the person who is not responsible: the Speaker of this House. If the hon. Gentleman wants to put a question down, he might seek the advice of the Table Office, which is always sound.

# Orders of the Day

## Children (Scotland) Bill

*As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.*

### New clause 6

REFERRAL OR REMISSION TO CHILDREN'S HEARING ON CONVICTION

'.—(1) In section 173 of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1975 (reference or remission to children's hearing where child guilty of an offence: solemn proceedings) for subsections (1) to (3) there shall be substituted—

"(1) Where a person who is charged with an offence and pleads guilty to, or is found guilty of, that offence—

(a) is a child who is not subject to a supervision requirement; or

(b) is aged sixteen years or over and is subject to a supervision requirement,

the court on that plea or finding may—

(i) instead of making an order, remit the case to the Principal Reporter to arrange a children's hearing to dispose of the case; or

(ii) request the Principal Reporter to arrange a children's hearing for the purpose of obtaining their advice as to the treatment of the child.

(2) Where a child who is charged with an offence and pleads guilty to, or is found guilty of, that offence—

(a) is aged under sixteen years; and

(b) is subject to a supervision requirement,

the court dealing with the case if it is—

(i) the High Court, may; and

(ii) if it is the sheriff court, shall,

request the Principal Reporter to arrange a children's hearing for the purpose of obtaining their advice as to the treatment of the child.

(3) Where a court has obtained the advice of a children's hearing in pursuance of paragraph (ii) of subsection (1) above or of subsection (2) above, the court, after consideration of the advice received from the children's hearing may, as it thinks proper, itself dispose of the case or remit the case as mentioned in paragraph (i) of the said subsection (1).".

(2) In section 372 of that Act (reference or remission to children's hearing where child guilty of an offence: summary proceedings) for subsections (1) to (3) there shall be substituted—

"(1) Where a person who is charged with an offence and pleads guilty to, or is found guilty of, that offence—

(a) is a child who is not subject to a supervision requirement; or

(b) is aged sixteen years or over, and who is subject to a supervision requirement,

the court on that plea or finding may—

(i) instead of making an order, remit the case to the Principal Reporter to arrange a children's hearing to dispose of the case; or

(ii) request the Principal Reporter to arrange a children's hearing for the purpose of obtaining their advice as to the treatment of the child.

(2) Where a child who is charged with an offence and pleads guilty to, or is found guilty of, that offence and—

(a) is aged under sixteen years; and

(b) is subject to a supervision requirement,

the court dealing with the case if it is—

(i) the High Court, may; and

(ii) if it is the sheriff court, shall,

request the Principal Reporter to arrange a children's hearing for the purpose of obtaining their advice as to the treatment of the child.

(3) Where a court has obtained the advice of a children's hearing in pursuance of paragraph (ii) of subsection (1) above or of subsection (2) above, the court, after consideration of the advice received from the children's hearing may, as it thinks proper, itself dispose of the case or remit the case as mentioned in paragraph (i) of the said subsection (1).".'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

*Brought up, and read the First time.*

3.41 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton):** I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

**Madam Speaker:** With this, it will be convenient to discuss Government amendments Nos. 201 to 206 and 215.

**Mr. George Robertson** (Hamilton): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. In the light of earlier exchanges, I should say that this is a serious point of order. It relates to the fact that the Government tabled, at the close of business on Thursday night, some 43 pages of amendments and new clauses to the Bill, which is now on Report.

The Government may have been close to being in order in doing that, but it cannot be good for the House that 43 pages of amendments and new clauses are submitted at 10 o'clock on a Thursday night. A number of those amendments, but not all of them, may relate to commitments that were given in Committee, but it cannot be right for the Opposition, and especially the Scottish Opposition, to be faced with 43 pages of amendments on a Thursday night and then have to plough through them. That must be getting close to being an abuse of the House.

I make this point of order in all seriousness, because this is a special Bill, which is widely welcomed throughout Scotland. It is long overdue and we welcome it. Not only that, it is a Bill for which the Opposition made a special concession to the Government by agreeing to have the Second Reading in the Scottish Grand Committee and consequently saving Government time. It is therefore all the more objectionable—I hope that you will agree with this, Madam Speaker—that the Government should treat the House in such a way, and make life so uncomfortable for Opposition Members who are concerned about and deeply interested in the issues raised by the Bill, by tabling so many amendments and new clauses at the last conceivable moment.

**Mr. James Wallace** (Orkney and Shetland): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. During the Committee stage, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, in an effort, no doubt, to be helpful to the Committee, said that he would take away and consider a range of issues. The difficulty with the amendments having been tabled so late is that it is only after they have been tabled that we have been able to identify the issues on which consideration was promised but about which nothing has been done. By that stage, it was too late to table amendments to raise the matters today on Report.

There has been an effort to ensure that we go forward on a non-partisan basis, but our patience is starting to stretch a bit. I know that the issues are complex, but I would have hoped that if they were that complex, even this debate could have been delayed until another day—

*[Mr. James Wallace]*

perhaps to a day that was not a Scottish bank holiday—when we could have considered the issues further after the Government had had time to table amendments.

**Madam Speaker:** Does the Minister wish to respond?

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** On a point of order, Madam Speaker. In an effort to be helpful in this matter, may I say that many of the amendments arose out of representations made by Opposition Members in Committee. In line with the precedent of the English Children Bill, to which there was an enormous number of amendments, genuine efforts were made to meet those representations. However, the matters were complex in detail, although not controversial.

There are, of course, other provisions that will, no doubt, be further amended in the other place and there will be further debates in the Commons. If Opposition Members feel that there are substantive issues that require further consideration, the House will, I have no doubt, have a further opportunity to consider them in due course. Most of the amendments meet points raised in Committee and are a response to concerns and requests from Opposition Members.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Madam Speaker:** Order. As the House knows, I cannot allow a debate to follow points of order. I am concerned about the matter because I am aware that in trying to be helpful and generous, the Minister gave a number of commitments in Committee. However, I realise how extremely unhelpful it has been to Opposition Members to have the amendments tabled so late. They have not been able to make a full appraisal or take full account of the amendments in conjunction with the Bill. The Minister has tried to be helpful, but he has not been as helpful as he might have been. I am sure that he has taken note of that, as we all have. This is a lesson to be learnt for the future.

3.45 pm

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** The new clause would amend the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1975 to provide a facility for the courts to refer the cases of certain children who have pleaded guilty or who have been found guilty of an offence directly to the hearings system for disposal. It is considered that the children's hearings system is genuinely better placed to deal with such offenders.

Sections 173 and 372 of the Criminal Procedures (Scotland) Act 1975 have the effect that the court cannot make a direct referral. Many courts seek the advice of the hearing and only then dispose of the case or refer it again to the hearing for disposal. This introduces delay into the system and causes inconvenience to the courts, the hearings system and the child. The new clause would allow the court, in appropriate cases, to refer the child's case directly to the reporter for disposal by a children's hearing.

**Dr. Norman A. Godman** (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Can the Minister explain why, in proposed subsections (2)(i) and (2)(ii), the High Court has a degree of discretion which is denied to the sheriff court? Is the reason the severity of the offence presumably dealt with by the former?

There is a huge mass of new clauses and amendments. Has the Minister tabled the amendments he promised on Friday 21 April during the Report stage of the Carers (Recognition and Services) Bill? He promised that he would either table amendments on Report or see that they were tabled in the other place.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** The point is simply that the principal reporter can arrange a children's hearing for the purpose of obtaining its advice on the treatment of the child. The new clause would give the court the power to refer the case directly to the reporter in certain circumstances, which is a safeguard, makes for more efficiency and is generally in the interests of children.

Clause 59 of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill provides powers for the Secretary of State to provide 100 per cent. funding for 16 and 17-year-olds subject to supervision requirements. The clause provides for a simplified means of disposal and improves the interface between the courts and the children's hearings system.

Amendments Nos. 201 to 206 and 215 introduce various changes to ensure that the references in the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1975 to the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 are brought into line with the provisions of the Bill.

**Mrs. Maria Fyfe** (Glasgow, Maryhill): I should like to ask the Minister a couple of brief questions, one of which has already been raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman). In new clause 6(2), why is it stipulated that

"the High Court, may; and

(ii) if it is the sheriff court, shall,

request the Principal Reporter to arrange a children's hearing"?

Equally serious cases come before both, so it is not clear why the distinction has been made.

Why have the district courts not been mentioned in the new clause? Most of the crimes likely to be committed in Scotland come before district courts, so it is surprising that the new clause does not mention them.

**Dr. Godman:** I asked the Minister the same question earlier: why does the High Court have a discretion that is denied to the sheriff court? My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) is also right to ask why the district courts are not mentioned. Is the

"advice as to the treatment of the child"

referred to in subsection (2) of the new clause analogous to a social report of the type sometimes asked for by a judge or sheriff?

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** I can answer both points. First, the High Court "may" because the cases referred to it will in all likelihood be considered more serious. Secondly, I shall examine the point about the district courts not having been included. If there is merit in the point, we can insert it later in the passage of the Bill.

As the hon. Gentleman knows very well—his wife has played a leading role as a social worker—the role of reporter is different from that of a social worker. He, of course, is independent and has to make an independent report to the court—*[Interruption.]* I see that Opposition Members are amused to note that I have the information ready to hand. The reasoning behind the precise wording of the new clause is that it repeats the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act.

**Mrs. Fyfe:** It is hardly an answer to say that this simply repeats the wording of existing legislation. This was a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reform the law on children. To say, furthermore, that the High Court generally deals with far more serious cases does not answer the point either. No matter how serious a case may be, it would still seem necessary to request the principal reporter to arrange a children's hearing so that advice can be given about the treatment of the child. Even in the worst cases at the High Court, surely such advice would need to be sought.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** It depends on the circumstances of the case. If the child were involved in a murder inquiry, the gravity of the case would be such that it would properly come before the High Court.

The new clause enables the courts to refer the cases of certain young people who have offended direct to the children's hearing for disposal. We think that that is a sensible provision which complements the provision in the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill to provide for such young people non-custodial disposal, which attracts 100 per cent. funding from the Scottish Office. I believe that that too is generally welcomed; it discharges the undertaking in the White Paper "Scotland's Children", to enable children's hearings to deal with certain young people aged 16 and 17 for whom full criminal justice disposals are not appropriate.

If the child has been involved in a murder investigation or a serious crime, of course he will not fit into that category. I understand that that is why "may" has been used in that context.

**Mr. Phil Gallie** (Ayr): New clause 21 was discussed in Committee during the 13th sitting on 6 March. On that occasion we talked of supplementary secure units and suggested that the courts, especially sheriff courts, should have discretion to use such units without reference to children's panels. Does not new clause 6 cut across the objectives behind new clause 21? Does it not conflict with the sympathetic words of my hon. Friend the Minister in Committee?

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** We are not now discussing new clause 21. I note what my hon. Friend has said and no doubt we shall return to his point later in our debates.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.*

**New clause 8**

REGISTRATION OF BIRTHS BY PERSONS WHO ARE THEMSELVES CHILDREN

'.—(1) In paragraph (a) of section 14(1) of the Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages (Scotland) Act 1965 (duty of father and mother to give information of particulars of birth), for the words "father or mother of the child" substitute "child's father or mother (whether or not they have attained the age of sixteen years)".

(2) Where, at any time after the coming into force of the Age of Legal Capacity (Scotland) Act 1991 but before the coming into force of subsection (1) above, a person mentioned in the said paragraph (a) who had not at that time attained the age of sixteen years purported to fulfill the duty mentioned in the said section 14(1), he shall be presumed to have had legal capacity to fulfill that duty.

(3) In section 18 of the said Act of 1965 (registration of birth of child born out of wedlock), after subsection (2) add—

"(3) A person under the age of sixteen years has legal capacity—

(a) to make a request, declaration or statutory declaration under subsection (1), or (2)(b) above if, in the opinion of the registrar; or

(b) to make an application under subsection (2)(c) above if, in the opinion of the sheriff,

that person understands the nature of the request or, as the case may be, of the declaration, statutory declaration or application; and without prejudice to the generality of this subsection a person twelve years of age or more shall be presumed to be of sufficient age and maturity to have such understanding.".

(4) Where, at any time after the coming into force of the Age of Legal Capacity (Scotland) Act 1991 but before the coming into force of subsection (3) above, a person who had not at that time attained the age of sixteen years made a request, declaration, statutory declaration or application mentioned in subsection (1), or (2) of the said section 18 in relation to a child in respect of whose birth an entry was consequently made under the said subsection (1) in a register of births, or as the case may be under the said subsection (2) in the Register of Corrections etc., the person shall be presumed to have had legal capacity to make the request, declaration, statutory declaration, or application in question.'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

*Brought up, and read the First time.*

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

**Madam Speaker:** With this, it will be convenient to discuss Government amendments Nos. 141 to 143.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** I commend the new clause. Its purpose is to ensure that parents who are under the age of 16 years will have the necessary legal capacity to fulfil their duty under the Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages (Scotland) Act 1965 to register their child. The clause is required because doubts have arisen whether after the Age of Legal Capacity (Scotland) Act 1991 a person under the age of 16, who is the father or mother of a child, has the legal capacity to register the birth of the child or to have his or her name entered in the register of births. It is clearly desirable that such doubts should be removed as soon as possible so as to ensure that accurate details about the birth of children can be entered in the register of births, which may have been given by persons under 16 since the 1991 Act.

The clause also has the effect of validating any entry in the register of births that may have been made by a person under 16 years of age since the 1991 Act. We do not wish to encourage parenthood in persons so young but we recognise that it happens. The aim behind the clause is to avoid compounding the difficulties by not allowing such young parents to meet their duty under the 1965 Act.

The clause meets the concerns of the registrar general, who is anxious to ensure that the register of births is as complete and accurate as possible. These provisions will apply retrospectively so as to make lawful all registrations by under-aged parents for the avoidance of doubt.

Amendments Nos. 141 to 143 make it clear that an application for the re-registration of a birth, or for a change of name, may be made by a person aged under 16 years. The amendments make it clear that such applications since the 1991 Act are valid.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.*

**New clause 9**

WELFARE OF CERTAIN CHILDREN IN HOSPITALS AND NURSING HOMES ETC.

'.—(1) Where a child is provided with residential accommodation by a person mentioned in subsection (3) below and it appears to the person that the child either—

(a) has had no parental contact for a continuous period of three months or more; or

(b) is likely to have no parental contact for a period which, taken with any immediately preceding period in which the child has had no such contact, will constitute a continuous period of three months or more,

the person shall (whether or not the child has been, or will be, so accommodated throughout the continuous period) so notify the local authority in whose area the accommodation is provided.

(2) A local authority receiving notification under subsection (1) above shall—

(a) take such steps as are reasonably practicable to enable them to determine whether the child's welfare is adequately safeguarded and promoted while he is so accommodated; and

(b) consider the extent to which (if at all) they should exercise any of their functions under this Act with respect to the child.

(3) The persons are—

(a) any health board constituted under section 2 of the National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1978;

(b) any national health service trust established under section 12A of that Act;

(c) any person carrying on—

(i) a private hospital registered under Part IV of the Mental Health (Scotland) Act 1984; or

(ii) a nursing home in respect of which either he is registered under section 1(3) of the Nursing Homes Registration (Scotland) Act 1938 or exemption has been granted under section 6 or 7 of that Act.

(4) For the purposes of subsection (1) above, a child has parental contact only when in the presence of a person having parental responsibilities in relation to him.

(5) A person duly authorised by a local authority may in the area of that authority, at all reasonable times, enter for the purposes of subsection (2) above or of determining whether there has been compliance with subsection (1) above any such place as is mentioned in sub-paragraph (i) or (ii) of subsection (3)(c) above and may for those purposes inspect any records or registers relating to that place; and subsections (2A) to (2D) and (4) of section 6 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 (exercise of powers of entry and inspection) shall apply in respect of a person so authorised as they apply in respect of a person duly authorised under subsection (1) of that section.'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

*Brought up, and read the First time.*

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The clause provides a further element of child protection that we consider entirely relevant to a children Bill. It relates to children who are accommodated in health care establishments for lengthy periods and who for various reasons appear to have had no contact with parents or people with parental responsibilities for them for three months or more.

I believe that the chances of children finding themselves in such a situation are remote. The links between hospitals and social workers are strong. In many instances, hospitals have dedicated social workers.

If, however, there is any chance of a child being abandoned or neglected by his or her parents within the health care system, it is right that we should take steps to deal with the matter. That we have done with the clause, which will ensure that if a child has not had contact with parents or those with parental responsibilities for three months, the health board, nursing home or a person operating a private hospital will be required to inform the social work department, which will take steps to enable it to determine whether the child's welfare is adequately safeguarded and promoted. The social work department will also consider the extent to which it should exercise any of its functions under the Act, with respect to the child.

I commend the new clause to the House as a small but useful further safeguard for children.

4 pm

**Mrs. Fyfe:** A couple of questions also arise out of new clause 9, which I hope the Minister will be able to answer at once. First, the White Paper promised to get children out of long-stay hospital. Can the Minister tell us today when that happy day might arise? Secondly, we welcome the fact that the Minister has, in subsection (4) of the new clause, taken up the point that was made in Committee—that parental contact should not only be a matter of telephoning and sending letters to the child but should be physical presence—but the way in which it is worded means that such a contact could literally be for just a minute, with an infrequent visiting time and long times between visits. That hardly seems an adequate way to respond to the criticism of the Bill. Will he have a further think about subsection (4) before the Bill finally comes to a conclusion?

**Dr. Godman:** I welcome the new clause, but I would like to ask the Minister—if I can catch his ear for about 10 seconds—just a couple of questions. If the child is incapacitated in a hospital, would it be the hospital social worker who would take on responsibility? I know that we are talking about only a few cases, but if a child is in a private home, would he or she simply be assigned, or consigned, to the local social work area team? I think that the period of three months is reasonable enough, but what about the child whose single parent is incapacitated, who stays in a hospital? Where the parent is unable for entirely legitimate reasons to visit the child in hospital, what safeguards are given to her?

The Minister is racing through these new clauses so quickly. I think that it is only right and proper that we ask him such questions. With reference to the questions that I have asked him, it would have been helpful if he and his officials had provided us with notes on the new clauses and amendments.

Also, what of the mother who is incapacitated and cannot visit her child in hospital? What safeguards does she have in those circumstances in relation to the specified period of three months?

**Dr. John Reid** (Motherwell, North): Like most hon. Members, from both sides of the House, I welcome the measures that have been introduced in the new clause. During the Minister's explanation of the new clause, he emphasised the need for particular care when a child is suffering—presumably in a long-term institution—from bad health or is shown to be socially deprived, in the sense of a lack of parents. My one worry is why it has taken us so long to fill that gap, to plug that loophole. What was the position up until now? Was it possible under similar

legislation for a child thus placed to have gone for a considerable period in ill health and also be deprived of the social support of parents or guardians?

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** I should reply in relation to the White Paper, as it addresses the points that have been expressed. The requirement for the removal of a child who does not need to be in a long-stay hospital has, I understand, now been met.

I am quite happy to look at the terms of subsection (4). It is perfectly well drafted, but I will examine it and give considered reflection to the point made by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe).

Hospital social workers would be involved. The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) raised the issue of a mother who was incapacitated; I believe, from my experience as a Member of Parliament, that social work departments respond positively and sensibly whenever they can in such circumstances.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.*

**New clause 10**

INQUIRIES INTO MATTERS AFFECTING CHILDREN.

'. After section 6A of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 there shall be inserted—

*"Local authority inquiries into matters affecting children*

6B.—(1) Without prejudice to section 6A(1) of this Act, a local authority may cause an inquiry to be held into their functions under this Act, or any of the enactments mentioned in section 5(1B) of this Act, in so far as those functions relate to children.

(2) The local authority may, before an inquiry under this section is commenced, direct that it be held in private; but where no such direction is given, the person holding the inquiry may if he thinks fit hold it, or any part of it, in private.

(3) Subsections (2) to (6) of section 210 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (powers in relation to local inquiries) shall apply in relation to an inquiry under this section as they apply in relation to a local inquiry under that section, so however that, for the purposes of the application, any reference in those subsections to a Minister shall be construed as a reference to the local authority and any reference to an officer of his Department as a reference to an officer of that authority.

(4) The expenses incurred by a local authority in relation to an inquiry under this section (including such reasonable sum as the authority may determine for the services of any of their officers engaged in the inquiry) shall, unless the authority are of the opinion that those expenses should be defrayed in whole or in part by them, be paid by such party to the inquiry as they may direct; and the authority may certify the amount of the expenses so incurred.

(5) Any sum certified under subsection (4) above and to be defrayed in accordance with a direction under that subsection shall be a debt due by the party directed and shall be recoverable accordingly.

(6) The local authority may make an award as to the expenses of the parties at the inquiry and as to the parties by whom such expenses shall be paid.".'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

*Brought up, and read the First time.*

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

**Madam Speaker:** With this, it will be convenient to discuss also Government amendments Nos. 200 and 216.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** The new clause would confer on the local authority a specific power to hold social work inquiries into children's issues. It would enable social work of concern relating to such issues to be investigated locally and in a credible way, removing the need for a full-scale inquiry to be conducted by the Secretary of State.

The powers are not intended to be used as a first resort; such inquiries are not designed to be undertaken lightly, but are meant rather to complement other measures available to authorities such as local inspection, management, consultation and informal investigations. Guidance will be issued to remind local authorities of those alternative options.

Amendment No. 200 would ensure that such an inquiry could be held without prejudice to the Secretary of State's power to hold his own inquiry under section 6A, and amendment No. 216 makes minor amendments to the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1975.

**Mr. Wallace:** If the proposed provision had been in place in 1991, would it have been for the local authority itself to set up an inquiry into the events surrounding the removal of nine children in my constituency, rather than for Lord Clyde to set up a judicial inquiry? That appears to be one possible consequence of the new clause, and, if it is, important considerations are involved.

As is well known, one of the issues involved in the case to which I have referred was the action of the council's own social work department. Whatever the nature of a case, however, and whatever the eventual outcome of action by a social work department, I do not think it satisfactory that the council involved should be responsible for initiating an inquiry.

Justice must not only be done, but be seen to be done. If the initiative for such an inquiry came from a body whose officers and employees were closely involved in the matter to be scrutinised by that inquiry—however independent and distinguished the person appointed to conduct it—many might feel that it would not be as rigorously independent as was warranted by the circumstances.

Costs are important as well. The new clause looks to me like an effort to offload costs from the Scottish Office to local authorities in the event of a repetition of the circumstances surrounding Lord Clyde's inquiry. On that occasion, the Scottish Office underwrote most of the costs—certainly those incurred by the local authority—and provided assistance with some of the legal costs of people with a particular interest in the inquiry, but it was a hard-won fight.

If such inquiries are to achieve what they set out to achieve, they will often cost money. I can imagine the impact and the possible ramifications in my constituency if people had been told that they must pay extra council tax to finance that inquiry: although everyone considered the inquiry necessary, many Scottish local authorities are relatively small, and the burden would have been considerable.

My final point relates to subsection (6), which says:

"The local authority may make an award as to the expenses of the parties at the inquiry and as to the parties by whom such expenses shall be paid."

Discretion is pretty well unfettered. If parents are dissatisfied with what happened and the way in which social workers or other local authority employees have dealt with their children, and if they ask for an inquiry and one is granted, the council could say to them, "You

*[Mr. Wallace]*

have got to pay for it too." That is not a satisfactory outcome. It may inhibit some people from asking for an inquiry that they believe is necessary.

I am uncomfortable with the new clause. A much greater explanation than the purely technical one given by Minister is required.

**Dr. Godman:** The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) has raised some important matters, especially in relation to Lord Clyde's inquiry. I support what the hon. Gentleman says about the need for a more comprehensive explanation of the new clause's implementation.

The Minister talked about guidance given to councils on the holding of such inquiries. I remind him, if he needs reminding, that the Bill will become an Act of Parliament in the near future, and that, shortly afterwards, social work departments as we know them will be abolished and scattered. The new social work departments—and, more important, social work committees that will be set up by the new authorities—will need comprehensive guidance, especially in relation to new clause 10.

Less than 20 per cent. of the new members in the new Inverclyde unitary authority are regional councillors. Hence, some 15 per cent. or more have no experience in relation to the creation and implementation of social work policies, procedures and practices. I do not know what the case is in Aberdeen, but in Glasgow fewer than 20 of the new councillors, out of a total of 83, are regional councillors. Again, the majority of those councillors, unless they are ex-social workers, will have no experience in these matters.

On Friday 21 April, during the Report stage of the Carers (Recognition and Services) Bill—I refer to column 443—the Minister promised that the Government would table amendments on the assessment of disabled children's needs. I have experience of ships draughtsmanship, but not much of parliamentary draftsmanship. I should have thought, however, that new clause 10 could be amended in another place to take on board that promise. Does the Minister intend to amend new clause 10 to achieve adequate protection for disabled children?

**Mr. Robert Hughes** (Aberdeen, North): I apologise for missing the introduction to the new clause. The Bill seems to be moving rapidly apace. I have no intention of delaying the Report stage. I am, however, somewhat concerned about new clause 10 and how it will operate. We have all had experience in our constituencies of the particular difficulties in relation to the abuse of children. People find the crime of child abuse so impossible to comprehend that, instead of a presumption of innocence, there is a presumption of guilt. Once an allegation of child abuse is levied against a family or an individual, they are often damned for ever and must bear the consequences.

I do not want to go into the detail of the case in the city of Aberdeen, partly because it would take too long, but also because it may awaken memories in the city that are best not awakened. However, I can say that a child was taken into care who then made very strong allegations of sexual abuse against a number of families with whom she had been in contact. There was one incontrovertible fact—the child had been badly abused from an early age. What was less clear, certainly in the initial stages, was who had carried out that extensive abuse over a long period.

4.15 pm

The social work department felt it necessary to lay charges against six different families, and to take all the children of those families into care immediately, at 7 o'clock in the morning. By the Tuesday of the following week, all the children had been returned home, but it took almost two years before the charges against the six families were finally dropped.

Those families were devastated. In some cases, marriages split up; in others, people were so demoralised that they became alcoholics. I understand that, even today, people in buses that travel through Aberdeen and pass a house belonging to one of the falsely—as it turns out—accused families say, "That's where those bloody child molesters live." A charge of child abuse can have serious repercussions. Of course, I am not suggesting that, if there are suspicions of child abuse, they should be withheld, but inquiries need to be conducted with some care.

When one of the six families first contacted me, I made a private approach to a counsellor in the region, who was sympathetic and who knew all the background to the case. I wanted an internal inquiry, so that I could at least hear the side of the social workers involved. It was not possible to have a rational discussion. I was told, "It's a witches' coven, with ritual satanic abuse." It became clear that there could be no private local inquiry on which I could rely.

I approached the then Under-Secretary of State, the right hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth)—I have rather lost track of where he is now, but that is neither here nor there. I do not want to make any cheap points. Coincidentally, I approached the right hon. Gentleman at the time of what became known as the Orkney child abuse case, which will be uppermost in the memory of the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace). He will know that there was a strong demand for a public inquiry in that case. I believed that my case was equally deserving of a public inquiry.

There were two differences between the cases—in the Orkney case, the people concerned were, generally speaking, middle class; they were certainly articulate. I make no complaint about that. They were able to put together a network of people throughout the United Kingdom to support their claim for a public inquiry. With my case, the people concerned came from six ordinary working-class families. I am sad to say that the only person on whom they could rely to articulate their case was me. Perhaps I failed them in not putting their case strongly enough. There was certainly no question of a public inquiry in that case, nor was there any question of it being conjoined with the Orkney inquiry, which is what I had sought.

I am almost sorry that I have raised the case again today, because I do not want it widely reported in the city of Aberdeen. The families concerned are now, with great difficulty, beginning to settle down.

The issue of inquiries being held either in private or in public is very serious. I share to some extent the view of my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) that the new unitary authorities have no experience of social work, but it must be remembered that, when we set up the social work departments, we had no experience, either. Although the new social work departments will be a different size, I

strongly urge my colleagues in the unitary authorities to make certain that there is a properly qualified—I think that this is already in the Bill—

**Dr. Godman:** Will my hon. Friend give way?

**Mr. Hughes:** Of course.

**Dr. Godman:** I hope that all the social workers employed in the regional and island authorities are re-employed by the unitary authorities. The point that I was making was that, if the Minister is to issue guidelines to social workers—to chief social work officers—he should also issue guidelines to councillors who are unfamiliar with the mass of legislation which has been passed since 1974.

**Mr. Hughes:** I do not disagree at all with my hon. Friend, but I was pointing out to him that I was a councillor in the city of Aberdeen following the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968, when social work departments were set up. Those of us who were lay members of authorities in those days had very little experience—well, we had no experience of social work departments—although some of us gained experience through the health and welfare committees.

I agree that since then a great deal has happened, so I hope that my colleagues in the unitary authorities—as I said, I believe that the Bill requires only that the director of social work is a qualified officer—will appoint not only a qualified director of social work, but a highly qualified director of education, and that the councillors will take an active interest in social work matters.

With regard to matters in the new clause and to other matters surrounding social work, the Scottish Office certainly ought to hold a series of seminars, at which experienced councillors who know social work and those who have never worked in the area because of the split of functions may share their experiences.

The ability to obtain proper advice—legal advice, if necessary—representation and expenses to enable people to put a case is of absolute importance. I frankly do not mind who pays for that, as long as the access of people who feel aggrieved to proper legal advice is not impeded or inhibited in any way.

When the Under-Secretary makes his winding-up speech on the new clause, I hope that he will address in a little more detail the circumstances in which he believes proceedings should be held in private and in which they should be held in public. There is certainly a balance to be struck between publicity, which is necessary to show that nothing is being hidden, and privacy, which is necessary to try to protect people against whom false allegations may be made. I hope that such false allegations—or mere allegations, since they are proved false or otherwise only once the investigation is completed—will always be taken seriously.

In the case to which I referred—I shall finish on this note just to show how serious the matter is—allegations were made not only against the six families, but against a senior social worker and a general practitioner. I found it particularly reprehensible that the allegations made against the working-class families were investigated, but not a single question was asked of the GP or the senior social worker; they were apparently above reproach. Yet we know from bitter experience that, in some places which are regarded as safe for children, such as residential homes, people have been employed whose abuse of the children in their care has been absolutely disgraceful and terrible.

I hope that we shall not take the attitude that if people are professionals they should be—necessarily—free from suspicion. However, we should not say the alternative. We should not say that, because an allegation has been made, it must be true.

I hope that the possibility of inquiries under new clause 10 will open up the scope for proper investigations, so that the interests of the children, which must always be paramount, will be protected. The interests of children are not always necessarily met by an investigation. There are sometimes innocent third-party children.

I hope that the Minister will tell us a little more about how the procedure will work, to ensure that the interests of children are properly looked at and to ensure that the interests of families are not destroyed because of prejudice in respect of particular allegations.

**Mr. Sam Galbraith** (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): As my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) has said, new clause 10 reiterates a theme that I raised several times in Committee. That theme is the protection of other persons and third persons involved in allegations of child abuse. I am not certain whether the proposal will deal with the problems.

I have no confidence in internal investigations by social work departments. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North, I have personal knowledge of a case which was brought to me by a person who was wrongly accused of abuse. The matter was pursued by the social work department, and it held an internal inquiry based on its various methods of operating.

That internal inquiry amounted to an examination of whether the procedures had been followed. No one challenged the basic evidence on which the charge was brought. That was the issue. People do not worry too much about the procedures, but if the basic premise is wrong, it does not matter what procedures are followed; in the end, the result will be wrong. We could not have that issue challenged. At the end of the day, I received a perfunctory half-page letter saying that all was well, when clearly it was not. Like many others, I have no faith in internal procedures. I have tabled amendments in an attempt to deal with that problem.

With regard to new clause 10, we would like an undertaking from the Minister that he will at least consider tabling two amendments in another place. The first amendment should state not that the inquiry may be held in private, but that it will be held in public unless the local authority gives a good reason for not doing that.

The second amendment should state that there must be an independent person running the inquiry, not a member of the social work department. If the latter is the case, there will be a social work department investigation into the procedures and not into the facts. Without those two criteria, involving some form of independence and a presumption towards public hearings, the proposal will be of limited value.

**Mr. George Foulkes** (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): I join my colleagues in welcoming new clause 10. I want to comment briefly on the circumstances in relation to the Ayrshire child abuse case, which has received an inordinate amount of publicity. My view

*[Mr. George Foulkes]*

might differ somewhat from that of my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes), but it is certainly not diametrically opposed to it, because I agree with much of what he said.

In relation to the Ayrshire child abuse case, I have great sympathy with the problem facing social workers when they are confronted with allegations of child abuse. For example, if a mother, who may be hysterical, reports child abuse and, after some examination and investigation, the social workers shrug it off and say, "No, no, this woman is hysterical. No child abuse is taking place," and it is subsequently found that child abuse has taken place, those social workers are likely to be, and in some cases in the past have been, pilloried by the press, by the media and, on occasion, by Parliament, for not following up those allegations.

With regard to the Ayrshire case, where social workers have pursued the allegations, have believed them and have taken some action, the press obviously felt that they knew a great deal more than the social workers, the medical people, the sheriff and everyone else involved. The press make their judgment and decide that they are absolutely right. As my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North knows, the media never get it wrong.

The media decide that no abuse has taken place, and they pillory the social workers in that instance as well. If social workers take action and are proved wrong, they are pilloried. If they do not take action and are proved wrong, they are pilloried. It is very difficult, as the Minister will know. He has great experience of such issues as a lawyer and as a parliamentarian. It is a difficult problem for social workers, and difficult decisions have to be made.

4.30 pm

In the case of Ayrshire, however, those decisions were made in the first instance by individual basic grade social workers, but in every instance they were reported right up the line to the senior social work managers. Of course, before any action could be taken, it had to be reported to the children's panel. The children's panel had to make a decision on the report from the reporter. In the Ayrshire child abuse case, the ultimate decision was made by Sheriff Neil Gow, after very careful thought and after hearing the children themselves.

It is quite astonishing that, after all that careful consideration by social workers, by members of the children's panel and by a sheriff who had gone into the matter in great detail, someone—in that case, it seemed to be only one person, in the press—who knew better than every one of them said that no abuse had taken place.

**Mr. Galbraith:** I do not want to pillory social workers. My hon. Friend and I are not in great disagreement in this matter, but he must realise that the initial charge on which the case is based is generally made by one person. That is rarely challenged. By the time it comes to the report of the children's panel, decisions are based on the initial report, which is often done by a fairly junior individual, yet that is taken as gospel and never challenged. That is where the problem lies.

**Mr. Foulkes:** I do not agree with my hon. Friend. If he looks at that case—there is voluminous paper that he can look at—he will see that it was not only questioned very seriously by the children's panel but corroborated by two doctors. That might impress him a little more than the views of social workers. It also went to the sheriff, who tested the evidence very substantially. It went through very well tried and tested procedures.

Because the media made up their minds that the social workers were wrong, they harassed and threatened the social workers concerned. There was doorstepping of the social workers in the early morning—their lives were made an absolute misery. All the social workers had been concerned about were the interests of the children, protecting the children, and carrying out the job that was given to them by Parliament.

The media try to get everything into black and white—it is either right or wrong; it is either clearly proved or it is not clearly proved. I mean no disrespect to the Minister, but lawyers get the same perception; that everything is either right or wrong, and that it can be proved or disproved by evidence. I am afraid that in such cases it is much more difficult to prove.

In family circumstances where abuse may have taken place, the only witnesses are the children who have been abused or other members of the family who may themselves be children. It is very difficult to obtain evidence. It is certainly very difficult to prove something beyond a shadow of doubt. That is why the issue is very complicated. Social workers deserve our sympathy.

In the Ayrshire case, an independent inquiry was carried out. We are talking about inquiries by two outside members of staff of other local authorities. They came to the conclusion that the social workers in the case had acted in an honest way, without any collusion. They certainly said that there were some faults in practice. Of course matters are difficult, and practice is not easy. Advice and guidance are needed as experience develops, as we have more cases and social workers can talk to each other about them.

The social workers did not do everything perfectly—we know that—but they acted honestly and there was no collusion, yet the media are still persecuting those social workers. They are asking the Lord Advocate to take up a prosecution against them. I shall see the Lord Advocate later this week, to tell him that he should make it clear that there will be no prosecution of those social workers, who have been cleared by that independent inquiry, and that it is intolerable for the threat of prosecution to continue to hang over their heads.

I have a couple of questions which the Minister may be able to answer. I wrote what was, for me, a reasonable letter to the Secretary of State some weeks ago about the case, because I take it seriously and I am deeply concerned about the way in which the lives of social workers and their families have been affected. My letter contained a number of questions, but I have not yet had a reply from the Secretary of State. My assistants have contacted the Secretary of State's office to ask for a reply as soon as possible, and the Minister may be able to use his good offices to say when I will receive such a reply.

I am no expert in this matter, although I served on a social work committee in Lothian region many years ago and saw the reports on such cases. My wife was a member of a children's panel for some time, although she has had no dealings at all with the Ayrshire abuse case. I was on a children's panel advisory committee for some time, and chose the members of those panels in Lothian. However, I do not pretend to have any expertise on the matter at all.

As a result of the Ayrshire abuse case, I have had to try to understand some of the procedures, and that has caused me to ask one question. Is it compatible with the caring role of social workers for them also to be investigators in child abuse cases? It must be at the moment, because only the police and social workers—with their statutory role—can carry out that task.

I say to my hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) that I doubt whether doctors would be keen to take on the role, because it is very difficult, and there are no other obvious people to take it on. It is difficult for social workers, who have other responsibilities in communities and in society for supporting vulnerable people, to take on that investigative role.

My main concern is that we in Parliament should not jump to conclusions in relation to such cases. When a reporter phones a Member and explains what he understands to have happened, it is far too easy to accept that as gospel and say that it is disgraceful and that there ought to be an inquiry, and that the social workers ought to be charged. That is what has happened on occasion in the past.

In this instance, particular sections of the Scottish media have done themselves a great discredit by pressing in that way without looking at all the facts in a reasoned and objective way. I use this opportunity to call on the media to try to deal with these cases more sympathetically and to understand the dilemmas and difficulties for social workers and social work departments.

I make a final plea, and in this I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North, who believes that the views of the children ought to be taken into account. It is easy enough to get the views of parents, but the views of the parents and of the children in child abuse cases will in some cases—by definition—not necessarily be the same. We must get the children's views, not only in an evidential way but also on what should happen to them in future. If different options are being considered for the future of the children, we must get their views.

Above all, we should not rush to an early judgment on the cases, which are very complicated. We must make sure that—wherever possible—the abuse cases which we know have taken place do not recur. The interests of the children who have been abused must be paramount on every occasion.

**Mr. Gallie:** In following the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes), I register some sympathy for the front-line social workers who were involved in the Ayrshire case. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that they had to make difficult decisions. The social workers were on a knife edge. They could have made an error if they had not taken into account the needs of the children. On the other hand, we ended up with a situation in which, for five years, the children were without their parents, and that gives me grave concern.

The hon. Gentleman referred to Sheriff Gow, but failed to acknowledge that other sheriffs were involved. For example, Sheriff Crozier found in another case a fortnight later, after the first cases were taken into account, that there was no case to answer. In those instances, the children went home with their parents. Then we had Sheriff Miller's findings. Here, I find a problem with the position in which the social workers were placed in those hearings. They were left isolated. I wonder how much responsibility their masters in the regional social work department should have in the matter.

I also wonder what examination has been made of the managerial structures in the social work department. I do not believe that the problem—if there was a problem—lay with the front-line social workers. I think that it lay behind, with the management structure, but I am not entirely convinced. Perhaps the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley feels differently.

**Mr. Foulkes:** It is perhaps too easy to criticise the social work department. The inquiry that took place at Western house at the racecourse was unprecedented. The social work department was guilty only of not understanding the magnitude of the inquiry it faced and the strength of legal support, advice and representation that the parents would have. The inquiry turned into a far more legal investigation than the department had realised. It was entirely wrong that it did so. The QCs took it over and made it into a legal hearing, when it should have been much more informal. If the social work department was guilty of anything, it was guilty perhaps of innocence and of being caught unawares rather than of negligence.

**Mr. Gallie:** I am not sure that it was guilty of innocence. In my involvement in the case over several years, I was perhaps guilty of naivety, if Sheriff Miller was to be believed. I did not follow issues through. I took assurances from senior members of Strathclyde social work department. I have a nagging doubt now that perhaps I was wrong. I am still not convinced, either way, precisely where the truth lies. If the children had been believed, perhaps they would have been back with their parents at an earlier date, but that is another matter.

The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley has highlighted another difficult case in which there are many questions. It emphasises the overall difficulties of the issue.

**Mrs. Fyfe:** This brief debate on new clause 10 has demonstrated the difficulties that a Minister can get into by throwing down new clauses and amendments at the last minute without giving people time to consider them. The Minister can see for himself how many serious concerns have been raised even in the short space of time that we have had to examine the new clause. I want to ask him a few questions about that.

What advice has the Minister sought on the general content of the new clause? I for one am not entirely clear whether the inquiry mentioned in newsection 6B(1) is intended to be an inquiry into the conduct of a social work department under the Act, or into its functions as such. I am not sure whether the purpose is to criticise the functions or the way in which a department fulfilled those functions.

A key question was put at the start of the debate, which I do not want the House to lose sight of. Is the new clause an attempt to pass the buck from the Secretary of State to the local authorities for inquiries into cases such as Orkney? Let us remember that it cost more than £1 million to inquire into the Orkney case. That is a lot of anyone's money. For a small, new unitary authority, it could be an impossible amount of money to find to conduct an inquiry as fully as necessary.

The Orkney case was of interest and concern far beyond the bounds of Orkney or, indeed, Scotland. It hit international headlines. Therefore, it would seem unfair

*[Mrs. Fyfe]*

and unreasonable to expect any local authority, especially one of the smaller new unitary authorities, to bear such a cost.

My last point, which I do not think any hon. Member has raised, relates to subsection (4) of the new clause, which refers to expenses being defrayed by such parties as the inquiry may direct. It is not clear what the Minister envisages by "such party". Could it mean parents? Could there be a circumstance in which parents were expected to pay the cost of an inquiry, which was necessary not only in the interests of the children for whom they had direct concern but in the wider public interest? Such an inquiry might seek to set a general principle on which to base the functions of social work departments.

If the Minister is to reassure the House that the new clause is not an effort to pass the buck, he must amend the new clause to make that clear.

4.45 pm

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** We will take on board the points that have been made on drafting and look closely at the new clause in subsequent stages. The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) and my hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) raised the Ayrshire case. We have looked carefully into the case. I can well understand their concerns about it.

The procedures adopted for the proof re-hearing were in accordance with the framework set out in the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968. The reporter to the children's panel and the families were represented as parties to the proceedings. The social workers were called as witnesses and, as such, were not separately represented. Following the proof re-hearing, the Court of Session ordered the return home of the children, and appointed curators to oversee the process of their return.

I understand that Strathclyde regional council fully co-operated in the implementation of the court's decision. We are now looking carefully at Sheriff Miller's report to see what lessons can usefully be drawn for the future. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Lord Advocate commissioned some time ago guidance for social workers and police involved in the investigation of allegations of child abuse. They expect to receive those proposals shortly.

**Mr. Foulkes:** I am grateful to the Minister for what he has just said. It is a step forward. As well as examining the outcome of the proof hearing at Western house, will he examine the procedure? As I said in an intervention in the speech of the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie), it was a rather legalistic inquiry. It became intimidating for witnesses and created many problems. The witnesses were cross-questioned almost as if they were accused. The QCs—I know that the Minister is a distinguished lawyer—took over.

That is not necessarily the best procedure for such hearings, in which much of the information is obtained in an informal way, not the formal way that we understand for trials. Could the Minister have a look at that as well?

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** I will look closely at the case in general to determine what lessons can be learned. I will take account of the hon. Gentleman's points.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) asked the relevant question whether the Orkney inquiry might have been handled differently if the new clause had been in place. It would have been possible under the new clause for a local inquiry to be held. However, the issues were of wide significance, and other local authorities were involved.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will certainly retain his inquiry powers. The background to the new clause is that, when the events with which the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland is so familiar took place, a review of the arrangements was ordered by the then Minister of State, my right hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth). One of the principal conclusions of the review was that local authorities should properly be equipped with a specific power to hold social work inquiries.

The new clause would increase the options available where matters of concern arose. However, a full-scale inquiry by the Secretary of State, with its burdensome consequences, was hitherto regarded as the sole option. In some cases, in which the issues are primarily minor and local, it is perhaps more appropriate for the local authority to be involved.

It is certainly not the purpose of the new clause to offload the burden of the costs on to local authorities. It would be for local authorities to weigh up the costs in deciding whether to exercise their powers to hold an inquiry. We believe that local authorities would act responsibly to their electors.

I can tell the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) that there is no intention to amend new clause 10 to provide for the assessment of disabled children. However, we shall amend the Bill as and where necessary to take account of the needs expressed in the Carers (Recognition and Services) Bill for which the hon. Gentleman and I were present during a Friday debate.

In reply to the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes), I believe that the interests of children must be central in the determination of these matters. There is a need to save children added pain and trauma, and under the clause local authorities will have three possibilities to consider. They can decide whether the whole of an inquiry should be in private, whether part should be in private and part in public but with limits on the identification of children, or they can decide to have no inquiry at all.

The clause gives power to appoint an independent person to hold an inquiry, which need not be internal. I am also covering the points raised by the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith). Like the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley, I have been a councillor on a social work committee. If I were still such a councillor, I would be inclined towards privacy.

Under the clause, I think that local authorities will use their powers responsibly. The essence of the matter is that there will be new powers for authorities to hold inquiries into matters related to children, and they will complement measures that are already available to them to deal with local problems. The powers will be available where the local nature of matters or problems make it inappropriate for the Secretary of State to hold a national inquiry.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.*

## ROYAL ASSENT

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris):** I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified her Royal Assent to the following Acts:

Finance Act 1995.

Building Societies (Joint Account Holders) Act 1995.

Civil Evidence (Family Mediation) (Scotland) Act 1995.

Requirements of Writing (Scotland) Act 1995.

Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation Act 1995.

## CHILDREN (SCOTLAND) BILL

*As amended (in the Standing Committee), again considered.*

### New clause 11

CO-OPERATION BETWEEN AUTHORITIES

'.—(1) Where it appears to a local authority that an appropriate person could, by doing certain things, help in the exercise of any of their functions under this Part [*Promotion of Children's Welfare By Local Authorities And By Children's Hearings etc.*] of this Act, they may, specifying what those things are, request the help of that person.

(2) For the purposes of subsection (1) above, persons who are appropriate are—

(a) any other local authority;

(b) a health board constituted under section 2 of the National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1978;

(c) a national health service trust established under section 12A of that Act; and

(d) any person authorised by the Secretary of State for the purposes of this section;

and an appropriate person receiving such a request shall comply with it provided that it is compatible with their own statutory or other duties and obligations and (in the case of a person not a natural person) does not unduly prejudice the discharge of any of their functions.'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

*Brought up, and read the First time.*

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Robertson) was responsible for one of those Acts and I am glad to see him in his place.

The purpose of the new clause is quite clear: it is a response to issues that were raised in Committee and it seeks to ensure proper co-operation between the various service providers in addressing the needs of children. It achieves that by providing power for the local authority to approach appropriate persons when it appears to the local authority that such persons would be able to help the authority in the exercise of its functions under part II of the Bill.

Subsection (2) of the new clause states that the persons whom the authority can approach are: any other local authority, a health board, a national health service trust and any person authorised by the Secretary of State. Any person so approached is required to comply with the request, provided it is compatible with that person's statutory and other duties. The new clause should encourage closer working among the various agencies and must be to the benefit of Scotland's children. I commend it to the House.

**Mrs. Fyfe:** The Opposition welcome the new clause, which responds to criticisms made in Committee.

I have a brief question. Paragraphs (a) to (d) of subsection (2) imply that persons who are not listed would be inappropriate. Surely the Minister does not mean that a local authority could not seek help from the Secretary of State. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman is not trying to evade such a responsibility, but will the Minister clarify that point?

**Mrs. Margaret Ewing** (Moray): I, too, have a brief question on subsection (2). Why does it not include the recognition of registered voluntary organisations, which often do a great deal of work in providing for children, including those with special needs and disabilities who were referred to earlier? How does the Minister see voluntary organisations playing a role under this subsection?

**Dr. Godman:** I should like to add to the question asked by the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing). Voluntary organisations and charities play an important role in catering for the needs of many children. Will the Minister confirm that the definition in subsection (2)(d) embraces the voluntary organisations and charities that do such fine work in the care of children?

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** I see no reason why the Secretary of State should not give such authorisation. The Scottish Office will give guidance in due course on all these matters. It would be open to a local authority to apply to the Scottish Office for guidance on any point that might arise. The new clause does not require co-operation between departments of the same authority, because social work and housing will be the responsibility of a single authority after reorganisation. It clearly would not be appropriate to require under primary legislation a body to co-operate with itself. Under subsection (2)(d) voluntary organisations can be authorised. They play a strong and supportive role and we look forward to that continuing.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.*

### New clause 12

REMOVAL OF DUTY TO REPORT ON OPERATION OF CHILDREN ACT 1975

'. Section 105 of the Children Act 1975 (which among other things provides that every five years there shall be laid before Parliament by the Secretary of State a report on the operation of such sections of that Act as are for the time being in force) shall cease to have effect.'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

*Brought up, and read the First time.*

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** With this, it will be convenient to discuss Government amendments Nos. 208, 90, 209, 210 and 95.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** This new clause and the associated amendments seek to repeal section 105 of the Children Act 1975, which requires the Secretary of State to lay before Parliament every five years a report on

*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]*

the operation of the sections of the Act that are in force. As all the substantive provisions relating to adoption and custody have now been updated and incorporated in other legislation, the need to produce a report on the 1975 Act becomes redundant.

Amendment No. 208 seeks to add section 105 to the repeals schedule in the Bill. Amendment No. 90 makes various changes to section 51 of the Children Act and is required as a consequence of the Bill. It does so by setting out the revised subsection in its entirety. Amendments Nos. 209, 210 and 95 propose minor consequential amendments.

**Mrs. Fyfe:** As it has occurred to the Minister to repeal a section of the 1975 Act, why has it not crossed the mind of anyone in the Scottish Office to include provisions in the Bill to report on or monitor the operation of the clauses of this Bill? Such a request was resisted in Committee and I thought that the Minister had undertaken to consider how often such reports could be made. Has that matter been considered?

**Dr. Godman:** I should like to reinforce my hon. Friend's plea. As the new unitary authorities will implement this Bill, it is important for such reports to be presented to the House so that we can see how the Bill's provisions are being implemented by the new authorities.

**Mr. Wallace:** I was not entirely clear from the Minister's comments whether the provisions to which the statutory duty of reporting relate are being transferred to another Act. Is there still a duty to report, albeit under a different Act, or has it disappeared altogether? How many times in the past 20 years has the Secretary of State laid a quinquennial report before Parliament?

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** We discussed this matter at considerable length in Committee. We propose to monitor what happens by research, social work inspectorate reports, statistical surveys and other ways. We remain firmly of the view that regular reports are of limited value. If produced annually, they do not adequately reflect changing patterns of service provision, demographic changes and other such matters. Indeed, they can be something of a bureaucratic chore. However, we strongly believe in the need for specific research projects, the results of which will be and are published; the regular publication of statistical data; the preparation and publication of local plans for child health care services; and the ability of the social work services inspectorate to carry out necessary inspections. All those represent a more useful and realistic way to proceed in future. After four quinquennial reports and the extensive development of services, we believe that provision along those lines would serve no useful purpose. New clause 12 removes a provision for the preparation of reports, which was useful in its time.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.*

**New clause 13**

EFFECT OF ORDERS ETC. MADE IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE UNITED KINGDOM

'.—(1) The Secretary of State may make regulations providing for a prescribed order which is made by a court in England and Wales or in Northern Ireland, if that order appears to him to correspond generally to an order of a kind which may be made under Part II of this Act or to a supervision requirement, to have effect in prescribed circumstances and for prescribed purposes of the law of Scotland as if it were an order of that kind or, as the case may be, as if it were a supervision requirement.

(2) The Secretary of State may make regulations providing—

(a) for a prescribed order made under Part II of this Act by a court in Scotland; or

(b) for a supervision requirement,

if that order or requirement appears to him to correspond generally to an order of a kind which may be made under any provision of law in force in England and Wales or in Northern Ireland, to have effect in prescribed circumstances and for prescribed purposes of the law of England and Wales, or as the case may be of Northern Ireland, as if it were an order of that kind.

(3) Regulations under subsection (1) or (2)(a) above may provide for the order given effect for prescribed purposes to cease to have effect for those purposes, or for the purposes of the law of the place where the order was made, if prescribed conditions are satisfied.

(4) Where a child who is subject to a supervision requirement is lawfully taken to live in England and Wales or in Northern Ireland, the requirement shall cease to have effect if prescribed conditions are satisfied.

(5) Regulations under this section may modify any provision of—

(a) the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 or this Act in any application which the Acts may respectively have, by virtue of the regulations, in relation to an order made otherwise than in Scotland;

(b) the Children Act 1989 or the Children and Young Persons Act 1969 in any application which those Acts may respectively have, by virtue of the regulations, in relation to an order prescribed under subsection (2)(a) above or to a supervision requirement; or

(c) the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 or the Children and Young Persons Act (Northern Ireland) 1968 in any application which they may respectively have, by virtue of the regulations, in relation to an order so prescribed or to a supervision requirement.'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

*Brought up, and read the First time.*

5 pm

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** With this, it will be convenient to discuss Government amendments Nos. 159 and 191.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** The new clause and amendments are technical. I can explain them in greater detail if any hon. Member so wishes.

**Mr. Robert Hughes:** As I did not serve on the Standing Committee, I simply seek an assurance from the Minister that the new clause will end as quickly as possible the problems of cross-border custody. I hope that it covers that problem as there have been cases where court orders in England and Wales have either not been recognised in Scotland or the other way round. It is important that, where custody orders are granted, they are put into effect as speedily as possible so that the parent with custody gets the child back if it has been illegally taken across the border. If the Minister can assure me that the problem is covered in the new clause or elsewhere, I shall be happy to leave matters as they stand.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Clause 28, as drafted, does not wholly meet our objectives as it does not provide in all cases for the transfer of a child who moves to or

from another jurisdiction within the United Kingdom. It would allow the transfer of welfare cases but would not—this is the problem—include cases where the principal reason for the child being subject to a supervision requirement is that he or she has committed an offence. The new clause covers all the cases that could arise when a child moves. I hope that that meets the hon. Gentleman's point.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.*

**New clause 1**

REASONABLE CHASTISEMENT

' .—(1) In any proceedings (whether criminal or civil) against a person for striking a child, it shall not be a defence that the person struck the child in the purported exercise of any parental right if he or she struck the child—

(i) with a stick, belt or other object; or

(ii) in such a way as to cause, or to risk causing, injury; or

(iii) in such a way as to cause, or to risk causing, pain or discomfort lasting more than a very short time.

(2) Any person who has care or control of a child but who does not have parental responsibilities or rights in relation to the child shall have no greater right than has a parent to administer corporal punishment to the child.

(3) Section 12(1) of the Children and Young Persons (Scotland) Act 1937 shall be amended by leaving out the words "assaults" and "assaulted".

(4) Section 12(7) of that Act is hereby repealed.'.—*[Mr. George Robertson.]*

*Brought up, and read the First time.*

**Mr. George Robertson:** I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

May I express a word of thanks to my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) and other Opposition Members who served on the Committee? I did not do so but I appreciate that this is a hugely important Bill. My hon. Friend the Member for Maryhill undertook a huge amount of consultation and was backed up by a strong Committee, which added its force of argument to the points put forward.

I am sorry that it was necessary to break the unique consensus on the Bill earlier this afternoon by criticising the Government for the number of amendments that they tabled at such a late stage. I hope that Madam Speaker's reprimand will serve as a lesson to the Government.

This important new clause deals with the last remaining area where domestic violence is still legal in Scotland. The proposal in respect of chastisement and punishment of children in the family home is moderate, modest and reasonable, and should be accepted by the Government. It is not political or partisan and has no party background. It has been taken directly from the excellent and thorough report of the Scottish Law Commission on family law, which was published in 1992 and dealt with this subject in commendable detail. It reached a definitive conclusion that I should have thought the Government would accept without dispute.

The new clause is not prohibitionist and does not seek to prevent physical punishment of children in the family home. It is not absolutist and does not prohibit all forms of punishment. It is specific about the areas in which it seeks to protect children. It would not ban or criminalise parental control or diminish the right to administer reasonable physical punishment against children in the home. There is a case for stopping all forms of physical punishment in the home but the new clause does not go that far and should not be portrayed as doing so. It sets out in explicit terms areas where a civilised society would want to protect its children. We therefore propose the new clause in the light of strong argument in its favour and in the hope that, even at this late stage, the Government will see the light and accept a change in the law.

It should be totally unacceptable for a child to be hit by a parent or anyone else with a cane, belt or whip. If the Government resist this necessary change to the law, they will be rightly condemned throughout Scotland. In addition, they should be forced to accept the full burden of responsibility and blame if even a handful of parents use the Government's attitude this afternoon to indulge in that form of violence.

The new clause seeks to clarify the law not only for parents and guardians but for the courts. That must be for the good of children and the criminal justice system.

**Mr. Raymond S. Robertson** (Aberdeen, South): Tripe.

**Mr. Robertson:** The hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Robertson) catcalls from a sedentary position. We all look forward to Mr. Eleven per cent. having an opportunity to speak later in the debate. We shall listen to any of his arguments that might conceivably be slightly more elevated than what he just shouted.

There is no reason why the Government should not accept the new clause, which is, after all, the recommendation of the Scottish Law Commission. If they resist this valuable clarification of the law, they will leave a serious question mark over their true intentions.

Under the Children and Young Persons (Scotland) Act 1937, assaulting, ill-treating, neglecting or abandoning a child are criminal offences. Section 12(7) allows:

"any parent, teacher, or other person having the lawful control . . . to administer punishment".

The prescription in law and the associated case law leave judges and sheriffs to decide what constitutes reasonable physical chastisement of children by parents and others. There is simply no legal precedent or generally accepted case on which judgments are based. That means that the law is confusing, with much disparity between the judgments of individual sheriffs of what they deem to be reasonable. That has, sadly, resulted in some parents who have inflicted fairly significant abuse on children—using belts, sticks and other implements in the name of physical punishment—being acquitted by the courts. That is why we believe that it is perfectly reasonable and sensible for the House to agree to the new clause and to give the guidance to the courts and to parents that they clearly want.

The new clause would offer more clarity for courts and for sheriffs. It would tidy up this unnecessarily loose area of legislation. We are not seeking to outlaw any form of physical punishment; we are simply providing clear legal parameters within which sheriffs can exercise their discretion.

The new clause has widespread support, from not only professionals and the Scottish Law Commission but public opinion, to which the Government should listen. If the Government tell the House that they will resist the new clause simply on the basis that the Children Act 1989, which applies to England and Wales, does not move into this territory and does not give this valuable

*[Mr. Robertson]*

clarification, their response will be seen as feeble and inadequate by people in Scotland. The new clause would make it clear to parents and to everybody else in society that it is no longer acceptable to use sticks, belts and other implements to deal a violent blow in the cause of disciplining children. Adults would no longer be able to use the defence that they were exercising parental rights.

It is important when considering the case for the new clause and for setting out forms of punishment that are not acceptable for parents to use against children to look at the background to the Scottish Law Commission's conclusion. This is not some woolly, liberal, soft-soap measure that has come out of some enlightened working party; there is no possibility of caricaturing the proposal in that way. If the claim that a modest smack to the leg will be made illegal is used as an excuse for not moving in this direction, the House should listen carefully to the reasoning and the arguments of the Scottish Law Commission.

The commission advanced a number of arguments as the background to promoting a change in the law. It said:

"If all corporal punishment is made unlawful there is less chance of violent abuse taking place. Parents will know where the line is drawn. There will be less chance of conduct which begins as chastisement ending up as violent abuse because the parent does not know his or her own strength or because the initial chastisement does not produce the desired response."

That was one of the clear arguments that the commission said could be used in favour of making the law much more definitive.

5.15 pm

A second key argument deployed by the commission was:

"We should follow the lead taken by Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Norway and Austria."

The commission refers to an American assessment of the Swedish legislation, which reported:

"The 1979 law is now taken for granted in Sweden. Whereas in 1981 parents reported 'thinking twice' before using any physical punishment, in 1988 parents simply say they do not use it."

That is the argument that we advance today.

Another powerful argument is available to the House in reaching a decision on the matter. I hope that Conservative Members do not feel that I am promoting the new clause in a partisan way or that there is a good argument for overriding their consciences; conscience may be in short supply among certain Conservative Members. I believe, however, that those who have read the Scottish Law Commission's report will have been affected by the arguments, especially by the one that the commission deploys in relation to the United Nations convention on the rights of the child, which was adopted by the General Assembly in November 1989. It says:

"States must take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation while in the care of parents, legal guardians or any other person who has the care of the child."

That view is subscribed to by all the members of the General Assembly.

The Scottish Law Commission went into the matter in enormous detail; it is a subject worthy of that attention to detail. The Association of Reporters to Children's Panels, which in Scotland would be regarded as being among the most authoritative voices in this field and an organisation that is closer to the issue of delinquent children than any other in Scotland, said in its submission that, at the very least, clarification of the scope of reasonable chastisement was required.

The Scottish Law Commission said:

"We received a particularly cogent submission from Professor Michael Freeman, of the Faculty of Laws, University College, London."

The argument here is especially strong. Professor Freeman made the point:

"The present law was, in any event, so imprecise and uncertain in its application as to be unjust to parents (as well as children). Moreover"—

this is an extremely serious point—

"much child abuse was corporal punishment gone wrong."

He quoted an American study which concluded that well over half of all instances of child abuse appeared to have developed out of disciplinary action taken by the parent. That must worry hon. Members as it worries so many people when they think about the horrifying stories of child abuse which are now becoming public.

The Royal Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children makes exactly the same point in its submission to the Scottish Law Commission. It says:

"From experience staff know that cases of child abuse often start as physical punishment and escalate."

Those two strong arguments should convince anybody considering the case on the margin. I hope that Conservative Members will listen carefully.

The Scottish Law Commission went on to discuss the options that should be considered by it and by the policy makers—ultimately, this Parliament. It produced two options that should be drawn to the attention of the House. It said:

"At the most general level we have to choose between recommending some change or no change in the present law. We have been impressed by the level of support, particularly from organisations concerned with child care or child welfare, for some change. We have accepted that there is force in some of the arguments for change, particularly in relation to corporal punishment at the severe end of what may be permitted by the present law. We do not therefore recommend that the law should remain unaltered."

It is incumbent on the Minister to tell us why, in the face of that strong recommendation from a body as authoritative as the Scottish Law Commission, the Government, in their mighty wisdom, are choosing to put to the House the option of no change in the present law.

In the next paragraph of the report, the Scottish Law Commission says:

"So far as the direction of change is concerned we have no doubt that, if there is to be any change, it should be in the direction of reducing the level of physical force which can lawfully be used in the punishment of children. No-one argued that the existing law unduly curtailed the powers of parents, even although what is permitted today probably falls short of what was regarded as normal and desirable in earlier times."

That is the vividly expressed argument of the Scottish Law Commission.

The force of the conclusions in the commission's report needs to be read and understood by anyone who intends to vote at the end of this short debate. The commission says:

"It seemed to us, on the basis of the comments which we had received, that there would be likely to be general agreement that a parent should not, in the purported exercise of parental rights, be allowed to cane, belt, whip or flog a child, or hit the child with a

shoe, slipper, wet cloth, piece of rope, wooden spoon, fish slice or any of the other objects which we know some parents use as instruments of punishment."

That is another vivid phrase and a horrifying commentary on what happens in the tiny minority of homes in which people hide behind the current imprecision in the law while doing these things to small children.

The commission went on:

"It also seemed to us that almost everyone would agree that a parent should not be allowed to strike a child in a way which actually injured the child (by breaking an arm, for example, or damaging an internal organ, or lacerating the skin) or involved a risk of injury to the child (as a heavy blow to the head, face or abdomen would do, even if by good fortune it did not cause injury in a particular instance). It also seemed to us that almost everyone would agree that a parent should not be able to strike a child in such a way as to cause, or risk causing, prolonged pain."

The commission believes that everyone would subscribe to that. Its conclusions are based on a sentiment which I doubt anyone in the House would dare to suggest was wrong or controversial. Yet the Government intend to resist the new clause. They intend to say, in effect, that they will not offer children the protection that the Scottish Law Commission believes essential. The Government would appear to be willing to continue to allow these excesses to take place in a minority of homes, and they are not willing to effect the clarification of the law that the commission and almost everyone else in Scotland believes important to protect vulnerable small children in the family home.

The commission went on—as if it needed to—to carry out an opinion poll of its own, conducted by System 3 Scotland, to establish what public opinion is in respect of assaults of the kind that I have described. We are discussing not ordinary physical punishment—a slap on the leg—but the sort of brutality for which people can be acquitted in the courts because of a legal imprecision. The opinion poll discovered that 94 per cent. considered that it should be against the law for a parent to hit a three-year-old child with a belt, stick or other object, even if the hitting was not likely to cause lasting injury. Many of us might hesitate before hitting a 15-year-old, given the possibilities that might be involved—I say that as one who has brought up three children, two of whom are older than that. But the fact is that 68 per cent. thought that it should not be lawful to hit a 15-year-old with a belt, stick or other object.

Public opinion, too, supports the view that the law should be clarified. The Scottish Law Commission, after powerful consideration of the detail and having listened to all the authoritative arguments, has conclusively told the Government that the law needs amending in exactly the terms that new clause 1 proposes. Only Her Majesty's Government claim to know better than all these people.

I shall not press the Government further until we hear what the Minister has to say, but I sincerely hope that he will recognise this powerful argument, that he has re-read the SLC report and that he recognises that a change in the law is necessary. If he does that, we will achieve all-party support for the new clause and for clarification of the law. If not, we shall have to divide the House, whereupon I shall invite hon. Members on both sides to support the new clause.

**Mr. Galbraith:** It is important, first, to point out what the new clause does not do so that we can avoid its being caricatured by the Minister and others. It does not tell people how to bring up their children—that is a matter for them. It revolves around good judgment and very good luck, probably more the latter. I would not want to proffer advice to anyone on how to bring up children; in any case, the new clause does not do that.

Secondly, the new clause is not, as I heard claimed on a BBC television programme, about telling people not to smack their weans, although it is often caricatured thus. I fully appreciate the pressures; sometimes one can be driven across the floor with the intention, if one can get one's hands on them, of doing more than just smacking the children—but most of us manage to resist the temptation. Personally, I cannot understand why anyone would want to smack children, but if people want to inflict a mild smack on them, within reason, so be it. The new clause does not outlaw that. It clearly establishes the limits that society wants to impose as to the extent to which children can be punished.

As it stands, the law is unclear and allows some people to abuse their parental and other rights. Physical punishment is often justified on the ground that it provides a learning mechanism to obtain some sort of Pavlovian response. It is said that children can be taught the difference between right and wrong in this way. Not true: we can teach them what to do and what not to do, but we certainly cannot teach them the difference between right and wrong—that will come only from reasoned arguments once conceptual analysis becomes possible. The problem is that many people start to think that the only method of getting something done is to inflict physical violence. We must put a stop to that idea.

We can apply two tests to find out what is acceptable in this area. The first is whether we would allow it between adults. Would we allow adults to hit one another with sticks, sometimes in public? Would we allow them to bruise one another in public? The answer is that we would have them up on charges—apart from in the case of boxing, which is the anomaly that proves the case.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton** *rose—*

**Mr. Galbraith:** It would appear that the Minister wishes to defend boxing. He is a classic example of the reasons why it should be banned.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Is the hon. Gentleman saying that he would introduce legislation to ban boxing?

**Mr. Galbraith:** Looking at the Minister sometimes I think that perhaps we should—but I am being ungenerous to him. He knows that I do not mean it: he is rather a nice chap. The House has expressed its view against such legislation, and that is the end of the matter for now.

We would not, as I was saying, allow adults to whip each other, beat each other with sticks or bruise one another. That would be considered assault. If it is wrong for us, it is wrong to do it to children.

**Mr. Tim Devlin** (Stockton, South): How then would the hon. Gentleman distinguish between smacking children, which would still be permissible under the new clause, and one adult slapping another, in public or in private, which would be classified as an assault?

**Mr. Galbraith:** Presumably if someone started slapping me in public without my consent, he would be charged. For some reason we permit this with children, although I do not like it either. People should certainly not be allowed to thump children with sticks or belts in public and get away with it.

*[Mr. Galbraith]*

The second test is whether we would allow it to happen to animals. The answer is that we would not allow much of what we are talking about to happen to them. We would not allow people to beat them with sticks so that they became bruised, cut or generally damaged. We would not allow them to be whipped. If we do not allow such punishment to be inflicted on animals, why do we allow children to be treated in that way?

The clause is not partisan, nor is it party political. I am not lecturing people on how to bring up their children. We all find the task difficult enough. I am merely saying that society has a duty to draw limits, and they should be drawn on the basis of the provisions of the new clause.

5.30 pm

**Mr. Gallie:** It may surprise the House to learn that I agree with some of the comments about widespread public support. If the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) spoke to his constituents and other people in Scotland, I suggest that he would find a great move throughout the country to bring back the belt in schools. The hon. Gentleman shakes his head. I challenge him to come with me to any town of his choosing to ask people if they would like the belt to be reintroduced in our schools. I guarantee that more people would side with me in that instance than with him.

**Mr. Robert Hughes:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Gallie:** I have only just started.

**Mr. Hughes:** I would like to take up what the hon. Gentleman has just said.

**Mr. Gallie:** All right, I will give way.

**Mr. Hughes:** I have some sympathy with the hon. Gentleman. There is a demand in some areas for the belt to be brought back into schools. The hon. Gentleman has a point there, but he does not have to follow that demand. If the public demanded that kids' right hands should be cut off when they were caught stealing sweeties from a shop, would the hon. Gentleman go along with that?

**Mr. Gallie:** The hon. Member for Hamilton suggested that we should take account of widespread public support. The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) has realistically and practically acknowledged that there is a demand for the belt to be brought back into our schools, and I thank him for that. To take up the intervention of the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North, I would not vote to introduce legislation that would result in people's hands being cut off on being found guilty of theft. I regard that argument as incidental.

**Mr. George Robertson:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Gallie:** The hon. Gentleman spoke for quite a while and others wish to speak. I have no doubt that he will have the chance to speak again in this debate.

**Mr. Robertson:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Gallie:** All right, I will give way.

**Mr. Robertson:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman but there is a protocol in this place whereby we give way to an hon. Member if we refer specifically to him and he rises to intervene.

Whether the hon. Gentleman is right about people wanting to bring back the belt in schools is beside the point. We are talking about clarifying the law to give protection to children—in some instances, small children—from hard implements being used upon them of the nature that I described. It is all very well for the hon. Gentleman to say, "Let us go to an average street in Scotland and conduct a straw poll." The Scottish Law Commission predicted that people like the hon. Gentleman would advance that argument. That is why it conducted an opinion poll. We know the finding of the poll, which is better than the hon. Gentleman begging me to join him in conducting a poll in a street somewhere in Scotland. We know that about 90 per cent. of those who participated in the opinion poll were opposed to punishment of the sort that I described being inflicted on three-year-olds. About 68 per cent. were opposed to it being inflicted on 15-year-olds. Surely even the hon. Gentleman can recognise that that public opinion is clear and firm.

**Mr. Gallie:** I am always reluctant to give way to the hon. Gentleman, who tends to make speeches out of interventions. That was hardly a short intervention, bearing in mind the fact that others want to speak. My challenge remains: if the hon. Gentleman wants to talk about public support, I leave my challenge on the table, as it were—I will go anywhere in Scotland that he suggests to ascertain public opinion.

In Committee, we debated a similar new clause. New clause 18 was voted down in Committee. No one voted in support of it. That was the right decision at the time. I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to take account of that decision when he responds to the debate. It is clear—*[Interruption.]* I hear Opposition Members saying "Silly man." The fact remains that in Committee new clause 18 was rejected. No one voted in favour of it.

**Mrs. Fyfe:** On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman is contriving to mislead the House. Although he called a vote on new clause 18 in Committee, it was not voted upon. There was no calling of a vote through the Chair. I did not take any part in debating that new clause because I did not want a lengthy debate to take place if that would prevent today's debate from taking place. The new clause related specifically to children in local authority day nursery care. We were not talking about parents' responsibilities.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. That is an argument between hon. Members; there is nothing for the Chair to rule upon.

**Mr. Gallie:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

In Committee, the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe)—this appears in *Hansard*—begged to ask leave to withdraw the motion. Hon. Members said "No" and thereafter the Question was put and negatived. If the hon. Lady reads my words in *Hansard* tomorrow, she will find that I said that not one Member voted in support of clause 18. I was right to make that statement and there was no point of order for the hon. Lady to make.

The hon. Member for Hamilton suggests that the new clause will clarify the law. I shall go through the clause in detail and refer to parts of it which would raise questions in the mind of any sane man. I believe that the clause has been motivated by political correctness. It is yet another small step towards the ultimate goal of removing from parents any right to chastise their children.

**Mr. Wallace:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Gallie:** No, I will not. The hon. Gentleman can make his own contribution in due course.

We have heard about Finland and Sweden, but there has been no mention of Singapore, where the use of corporal punishment has wiped out crime. I accept that the clause is directed towards children, but there are wider implications. For example, the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) talked about physical punishment being inflicted on adults. If a straw poll were conducted in Scotland on that issue, we might find majority support for such punishment. If the clause were agreed to and implemented, it would bear upon adults because it would lead to a ban on all forms of corporal punishment.

**Mr. Michael Connarty** (Falkirk, East): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Gallie:** No, I will not. I have no doubt that the hon. Gentleman will contribute to the debate by making his own speech—*[Interruption.]* I hear someone say, "Oh no," but I assure the House that it will happen.

Subsection (1)(i) provides that no parent shall strike his or her child "with a stick". Would a rap across the knuckles with a pencil be considered as use of a stick? We have already spoken about the belt, and subsection (1)(i) refers to "or other object". That takes into account everything, including my Order Paper. Would hitting a child with an Order Paper across the legs constitute an offence under the terms of the new clause? I suggest that that would be the position. Far from clarifying the law, the new clause would confuse it.

**Mr. George Robertson:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Gallie:** No. The hon. Gentleman has already made a mini-speech within my speech.

**Mr. Robertson:** I want to ask a question.

**Mr. Gallie:** The hon. Gentleman can take up the issue later.

Subsection (1)(ii) provides that "to risk causing, injury" constitutes a crime. If a parent were gently to strike a child, the child might take avoiding action which could result in injury. Such action by the parent could infringe the law. Perhaps an Opposition Member will choose to take that matter up.

There is further comment in the new clause on the risk of causing pain or discomfort

"lasting more than a very short time."

I will give way to the hon. Gentleman on that. Does it mean five seconds, 10 seconds, a minute, an hour, a day? Will the hon. Gentleman declare at this point what he means by "a very short time"?

**Mr. Robertson:** We are trying to give clearer parameters to the courts than they currently have. The court may decide what is reasonable in the circumstances. At the moment, there is no guidance at all. As the hon. Gentleman keeps asking me questions and not letting me answer any of them, I shall ask him a question, as he has the chance to answer. Has he read the Scottish Law Commission's report on the subject? Why does he not take its arguments apart, instead of the rather feeble debating trick of taking apart the new clause that it has proposed?

**Mr. Gallie:** I have seen and read part of the commission's report, but I agree that I have not gone through it line by line. I frequently read such reports and I frequently feel that the conclusions arrived at are unsound and are conclusions with which I disagree. The reason why I stand here today is to vent that disagreement. I make particular reference to the hon. Gentleman's earlier comments in support of the new clause because I am trying to negate the points that he made.

**Mr. Connarty:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way, as it will avoid me making a long speech later. Does the hon. Gentleman strike his adopted children with a belt or a stick? If not, why is he unwilling to support a law which would prevent other people from doing that legally?

**Mr. Gallie:** Looking back, I have to say that I certainly would not strike my children now as one is 25 and the other is 22; they are adults in their own right. In the past, as a parent, yes, I struck my children, although I never ever struck them in a way that would have marked them: had I done so, I believe that the law as it stands would certainly have allowed me to be taken to court and due justice to be exacted. I certainly did strike my children when they were younger, and I make no apologies for that. I do not believe that I at any time created undue pain or misery to my children by so doing. It was infrequent and I would like to think that any such punishment is more a deterrent than a controlling factor.

On that basis alone, I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to reject the comments coming from Opposition Members. Let us not make another mistake on such issues by listening to the siren vices of the Opposition; let us maintain the status quo.

**Mrs. Ewing:** I intend to speak briefly. I have listened with considerable interest to the points made by the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie). Needless to say, I do not want to pursue many of the points that he raised, as the arguments that he deployed were similar to those advanced on issues such as the abolition of slavery, about slavery being good for the slaves, who would not be able to cope with freedom; or how it was good to keep pushing young boys up chimneys because it gave them employment.

As society develops, we have to look carefully at the parameters laid down by its legislature. I believe that the ideals enshrined in this very important new clause are admirable.

**Mr. Gallie:** The hon. Lady does me a great disservice when she compares the comments that I made with the days of slavery and pushing young children up chimneys. We are in a different situation. I have raised questions of detail on the new clause. If the hon. Lady wants to contribute, perhaps she could ease my mind on some of the questions that I have posed in relation to the confusion that would ensue if the new clause were adopted.

5.45 pm

**Mrs. Ewing:** The hon. Gentleman must accept the clear point that I made: the legislature has a responsibility to bring forward ideals into its society which reflect views

*[Mrs. Ewing]*

and developments. The arguments that I used from history were put forward at that stage. Now, everyone regards them as ridiculous. In another century, people may look back on our debates—students of history, perhaps at some of the wonderful universities in Scotland—and wonder why on earth anyone opposed the principles being propounded here.

Of course there will be difficulties in legal interpretation. Any law that is instituted is subject to legal interpretation; otherwise we would not have lawyers, a legal system, and courts, in all their many different aspects. I believe that it is important, therefore, that we give some guidance. The Scottish Law Commission is one of the most respected legal bodies, and far too many of its reports have gathered dust on shelves and in the libraries of Scotland. We have not seen many of its very sound and effective recommendations brought into effect. This is a small measure, but it is one for which the Law Commission has clearly indicated its support, after taking substantial evidence.

The provision is also supported by organisations which see the effect of such punishment on children. The Royal Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children has clearly endorsed the new clause. We all accept that we are not trying to abolish the right of a parent to punish a child, but we are expecting limits to be set. I do not speak as a parent. Unfortunately I am not a parent, although I would have liked to be, but I have very interesting nephews and have watched them growing up and developing. I also worked as a teacher and saw the results in my classroom of some of the so-called "punishments" meted out to the children with whom I had to work from Monday until Friday.

It is right that if a social worker, teacher, doctor, health visitor—anyone who has a right to be in contact with the child—is concerned about the kind of chastisement being dealt out by a parent, he or she should be able to say, "This is outwith the parameters of the law and I will not accept it." That is where I come from. Of course there must be ground rules for parents, just as there are ground rules for teachers.

On punishment—not necessarily the belt—I could tell amusing stories about the class that I had to deal with for the last two periods on a Friday. The boys were desperate to leave school, could not wait for their school leaving date, and would be in competition all week to see how much of the belt they could get. Because I was the last teacher on a Friday, I was expected to be the one who would decide the competition. It was great fun for them until they discovered that I was not going to do it. So they had to sort it out before they came to my class. They knew the ground rules that I laid down within my classroom. I believe that that is what we expect within families as well. Children should always understand the parameters of the discipline and the behaviour that is expected of them.

The new clause lays down the social parameters of a responsible and caring society. I hope that all hon. Members will endorse it, because there are valid reasons for doing so.

**Mr. Wallace:** I, too, support the new clause. The real interest in the debate, which was opened so comprehensively by the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) is in what in the world the Minister will say in opposition to it. We had a foretaste from the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie). Let us examine his arguments. First, he argued that because for some technical or procedural reason no one voted for a parallel amendment in Committee that is somehow a compelling argument. He knows full well that that does not stand up at all.

The hon. Gentleman then suggested that there was some uncertainty in the law. The present law, however, is far from certain and the courts have interpreted widely what is meant by reasonable chastisement. In the briefing sent to us by Children First, we find that in one case a judge ruled that it was "reasonable" for a mother to use a belt on her nine-year-old daughter, leaving bruising—he said that that punishment was rightly deserved—yet in a different case, just a few weeks later, said that it was "unreasonable" that a mother had slapped her two-year-old in the face. Clearly, the present law is uncertain.

**Mr. Devlin:** I read that as well, and I felt that a clear distinction was made. One child aged nine had been slapped on the body and the other, aged only two, had been slapped on the face, which was obviously unreasonable.

**Mr. Wallace:** The hon. Gentleman has made my point even more compellingly by introducing another factor—the age of the child. That complicates matters further, but I find the use of implements to hit even nine-year-old children unacceptable.

**Mr. Gallie:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Wallace:** I shall deal with the hon. Gentleman's argument in a moment, and then allow him to respond.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned a tap over the knuckles with a pencil, or on the leg with an Order Paper. He knows that such action would not attract proceedings: he knows that the bringing of any criminal prosecution in Scotland will require the procurator fiscal, and he knows that no procurator fiscal would dream of bringing a case in such circumstances. If someone sought to use the civil courts, I suspect that—even if the case got anywhere—zero damages, or damages of 1p, would be awarded. It is as if a motorist was doing 30.5 mph in a 30 mph area: a prosecution simply would not be brought.

**Mrs. Ewing:** The hon. Gentleman's approach shows much common sense. As a well educated lawyer, however, will he tell us whether hitting a child in the eyes with an Order Paper or poking a child in the eyes with a pencil, as part of a disciplinary procedure, would be prosecutable?

**Mr. Wallace:** I think so. Indeed, I hope that it would be prosecutable even under the current law. Acceptance of the new clause, however, would put the matter beyond doubt.

Much of what we are discussing must happen within the four walls of a family home. It is clear that enforcement may be difficult. I do not think that we should take the new clause further, and include smacking: that would constitute an intrusion into the family home, and it would be almost impossible to secure any evidence. The fact that cases have been brought to court, however, proves that evidence of

unreasonable chastisement or chastisement with an implement can be obtained. School authorities, friends or parents may notice a mark on a child.

**Mr. Gallie:** The hon. Gentleman has defeated his own argument. He says that a smack is okay, but a smack was involved in the instance featuring children aged nine and two that he used to demonstrate the current confusion in the courts. I believe that at that time the court acted wisely and justly, and made a rational decision. The hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) mentioned a poke in the eye, and the hon. Gentleman himself said that the present law would recognise that. I think that he has made the case.

**Mr. Wallace:** I do not agree. I was trying to illustrate the huge discrepancies in the interpretation of the word "reasonable". The position would be clear, however, if a child had been slapped in the face so hard that the evidence remained: that would undoubtedly come into the category of having caused pain for more than a short time. The hon. Gentleman asked what constituted a short time. He may have been such a perfect child that no hand was ever raised against him—there is always a possibility, although the suggestion may stretch the House's credulity—but he probably remembers what it was like to be given a smack on the bottom, and how long the pain lasted. A sensible approach would tell him what sort of time scale we are discussing.

The hon. Gentleman also mentioned public opinion and political correctness. He may be interested to learn that only 3 per cent. of those surveyed by the System 3 poll to which the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) referred agreed that it should be lawful to hit a three-year-old child with a belt, stick or other object, and only 10 per cent. thought that it should be lawful to hit a 15-year-old with a belt, stick or other object. Given that the Conservatives' poll rating in Scotland is now about 11 per cent., some Conservatives—indeed, quite a number, even at that time—must have thought that the new clause makes good sense. Political correctness, if such it be, is clearly pervading the rump of Conservative support in Scotland.

Opinion poll evidence is important in regard to a change in the law to reflect a change in social conditions. When taking such a step, it is important to carry public opinion. There are two categories: public opinion that considers it unlawful to use a stick, implement or object that would cause harm to a child, and the large body of opinion that would not consider it right to extend that as far as a smack. I believe that the Scottish Law Commission has got the balance right, reflecting public opinion. It is difficult to imagine what opposing arguments the Government may deploy.

Unfortunately the Secretary of State has left the Chamber, but I am sure that the Minister will remember our Second Reading debate in the Scottish Grand Committee in Edinburgh on 5 December. The Secretary of State said:

"The Bill is founded on principles derived from the United Nations convention on the rights of the child".—[*Official Report, Scottish Grand Committee*, 5 December 1994; c.4.]

Let me remind the Minister that article 19(1) of that convention, which this country has ratified, states that parties to the convention must

"take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical and mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child."

I very much doubt whether our current legal position addresses that international obligation, into which the Government have voluntarily entered. I believe that the new clause would meet it, and I hope that the House will accept it.

**Mr. Malcolm Chisholm** (Edinburgh, Leith): I support this modest measure, which I believe is supported by public opinion. It is regrettable that the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) has not read the Scottish Law Commission report; if he had, he would have had second thoughts about many of the points that he made in his alarming and extreme speech. It concerns me that only four of his hon. Friends are present—five; another has just entered—[HON. MEMBERS: "Six."] It also concerns me that Conservative Members may be whipped through the Lobby to support—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. We have had a good debate this afternoon, and so far we have kept to the amendments. Let us keep to them now.

**Mr. Chisholm:** I was only going to say that Conservative Members may be whipped to support the status quo and oppose the new clause.

We have heard the definition of unreasonable chastisement in Scots law, which is very unsatisfactory. The judgment of whether a child is beaten unreasonably is highly subjective; as a result of that subjectivity, adults have been able to get away with inflicting severe beatings on Scottish children for years—indeed, centuries. The new clause attempts to change that subjective definition into one that is at least partly objective.

It might be simpler to outlaw any kind of hitting, and I am personally attracted to that option, but I realise that it would go too far for public opinion. Many people still wish to administer a modest smack. The new clause tries to draw the line between such chastisement and the serious physical abuse that, as we all know, still goes on day in, day out in Scotland. I ask the hon. Member for Ayr and his colleagues to think seriously before opposing the measure in a knee-jerk reaction.

Let me advance three arguments in support of the new clause. First, I instinctively feel—according to the Scottish Law Commission, the majority of Scottish people feel the same—that it is barbaric for adults to inflict pain on young people, particularly with sticks, belts and similar objects. That is just an emotional reaction but one of which I am proud. I was disturbed to hear the hon. Member for Ayr suggest that he approved even of the sort of barbarity that goes on in Singapore. Most people in this country have a natural revulsion against that and, indeed, physical violence of a less severe nature.

If the Conservative party is not persuaded by and does not sympathise with that feeling, it should at least consider—I said this many times in Committee—that the Government have signed up to the United Nations convention on the rights of the child. If that were taken seriously, the Government would have to support the new clause because that convention says that Governments must take legislative measures to prevent physical violence against children. As throughout the Bill, this is a simple matter of the rights of children. In the past, the

*[Mr. Chisholm]*

problem has often been that children have not been seen as full human beings. That is often why adults have felt able to beat children.

6 pm

My second argument against striking a child, apart from the simple barbarity of it, is that it is unnecessary. That should be clear if we look around society. Most children are brought up without such treatment and the majority of children are reasonably well behaved. We all know from our own experience that we do not have to treat children in such a way to get them to behave properly and to teach them the difference between right and wrong.

We should consider what has happened in relation to schools. The hon. Member for Ayr will disagree, but he if had read the Scottish Law Commission report he would have realised that it had considered all the evidence on the abolition of corporal punishment in schools and found that that in itself did not make a significant difference. Those of us who have been teachers can add our personal experience to back that view. We know that it is not necessary to treat children in that way.

The third argument that should be taken on board—again, reference was made to this in quite a lot of the evidence to the Scottish Law Commission—involves the long-term effect of such treatment on the children who receive it. This is perhaps the most important of all the arguments against such treatment. A wealth of evidence suggests that it makes children more aggressive and contributes to violent and anti-social behaviour. The Conservative party should consider that wealth of evidence.

This is a serious point. If one talks to violent criminals in prisons, it is amazing how many of them have been physically abused. Violent figures in history have often suffered such abuse. It brings to mind the fact that this week Alice Miller's book, "The Drama of Being a Child" is republished. She has concentrated on the effect of severe physical beatings on dictators and other vicious characters in history. In this week of all weeks, it would not be inappropriate to reflect that that was one aspect of Adolf Hitler's background. It is important, therefore, that the Conservative party considers the effect of severe beatings on the character and behaviour of young people who must endure them.

Subsection (2) may have something to do with the objections of the Conservative party. Of course the logical conclusion of not allowing parents to strike children in this way is not allowing other adults such as teachers to do so. We all know that certain private educational establishments still allow corporal punishment. It may be that a lobby made up of parents of children at such schools is influencing the Conservative party, but I urge it not to be so influenced or it will be seriously out of step with Scottish public opinion. I know that it is out of step with it on many issues, but it would be particularly regrettable if the Conservative party were to bury its head in the sand on this issue, ignore all the evidence and take what can only be described as a reactionary and deeply damaging position.

**Mr. Devlin:** I listened carefully to the comments of the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Leith (Mr. Chisholm). We are all concerned that people should not be unduly flogged or viciously assaulted. The question is not whether we agree that that is a satisfactory way to treat children—we all agree that it is not—but whether the new clause tabled by the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) and his hon. Friends is the best way to deal with the matter.

I listened with great interest to the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) when he read article 19 of the United Nations convention on the rights of the child. Having been on the Special Standing Committee that dealt with the Bill and having been approached by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) and others to sign the new clause, with which I have considerable sympathy, I have studied the matter carefully and spent some time on researching the issues around it. I have one or two reservations about supporting them and I shall tell them what they are.

Article 19 could be interpreted as calling on the Government to outlaw smacking. Subsection (1) of the new clause states that it would not be a defence if a child were struck

"(ii) in such a way as to cause, or to risk causing, injury; or

(iii) in such a way as to cause, or to risk causing, pain or discomfort lasting more than a very short time."

It all depends on how one interprets the words

"to cause, or to risk causing".

That is the difficulty. I can see why the Government are diffident about writing the new clause into the Bill.

**Mr. Wallace:** As the hon. Gentleman has shown diligence in relation to the Bill, he will undoubtedly have read the Scottish Law Commission's report, which considered that very point: whether the United Nations convention—

**Mr. Devlin:** I am coming to that.

**Mr. Wallace:** The hon. Gentleman will note, however, that the report concluded that the convention did not outlaw an ordinary smack any more than it outlawed an ordinary scolding.

**Mr. Devlin:** The hon. Member for Hamilton, who opened the debate so well, rightly said that the proposal had been lifted directly from the Scottish Law Commission report. Unlike some of my hon. Friends, I have read the report. It states:

"The vagueness of the existing law exposes children to risk of quite severe violence which parents may believe, rightly or wrongly, to be legally permissible".

That is the whole point. The difficulty is whether their learned Lordships—and I am an English, not a Scottish lawyer—are correct in their interpretation of the law as it stands.

Under the new clause, the use of such objects as belts or sticks to chastise a child would be outlawed, as would a violent blow. Subsection (4) of the new clause states that section 12(1) of the Children and Young Persons (Scotland) Act 1937 should be repealed. That is the existing Scottish law. My understanding of that law is that a violent blow would be construed as an assault on the

child, and that it would not be a reasonable defence if parents said that they were only administering reasonable parental chastisement.

**Mrs. Fyfe:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Devlin:** I should like to cover a few more points.

One or two important points have been made in the debate. The hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) said that we would not allow adults to hit each other with sticks and belts, and that we would not allow them to hit animals with whips, belts or other instruments of that nature, but an interesting distinction exists. We would not allow adults to slap each other—a point that I put to him in an intervention. In Scottish law, a slap, and even the placing of a hand on an arm, is construed as an assault. We allow parents, however, reasonably to chastise their children, and the new clause would still allow parents to administer some reasonable chastisement in the way of a slap.

Of course, the position is different in relation to animals because some animals must be controlled with the use of sticks, straps or whips. That is an everyday part of the animal's management. Anyone who rides a horse knows that it is permissible to strike it with a crop. We see that on our television screens most Saturday afternoons. No one prosecutes jockeys for administering some reasonable encouragement to the horse to run faster, so I do not want to get involved in that point.

The new clause would repeal the existing law—the Children and Young Persons (Scotland) Act 1937—which makes assaulting, ill-treating, neglecting or abandoning children a criminal offence. It would also repeal section 12(7), which allows any parent, teacher or person with lawful control to administer punishment. That, together with the extensive associated case law, leaves individual sheriffs and judges to decide what constitutes reasonable chastisement of children.

The law in this area can be confusing. However, in any area the law has to be interpreted on a case-by-case basis. That is why I said in an intervention on the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland that there was a great of difference depending on the age of the child. He pointed to a case highlighted by the Royal Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children of a judge ruling on appeal that it was reasonable for a mother to use a belt on her nine-year-old daughter, but not reasonable for a mother to slap a two-year-old in the face. Obviously, there would be different degrees of physical chastisement for different children. No one would condone—and no one does under current Scottish law—the use of sticks or straps on very small children.

The proposers of the new clause say that it would significantly tighten the law in this area, provide clear parameters within which sheriffs can exercise discretion and provide a clear statement to parents about what is acceptable physical chastisement for children.

**Mr. Wallace:** The hon. Gentleman has made an interesting point. Does he accept that one difficulty is that parents do not necessarily know what the law is? Would he hazard a guess at what age, under current Scottish law, it might be legitimate for a parent to take a belt to a child and at what age it might be illegitimate?

**Mr. Devlin:** As I understand it, there is no age divide—*[Interruption.]* I am happy to stand corrected if I am wrong. I understand that a parent can chastise a child of about 13 with a belt. That has been held to be acceptable in many cases. However, doing so with a child of 10 has been held to be unacceptable. The hon. Gentleman obviously knows Scottish law better than I do.

There is a problem with the arguments put forward by those who support the new clause. If they want to outlaw all physical chastisement, they have a good case. However, the new clause covers only belts, straps and other instruments. That leaves rather confused arguments. I have great sympathy with the view of the Scottish Law Commission that a safe disciplinary slap involving no risk of injury and no more than transient pain would be no more unlawful under the proposals than it is under existing law. Therefore, why is it necessary to change existing law?

I agree that there should be some guidance. Currently, the discretion to decide what constitutes reasonable physical chastisement lies with individual sheriffs. The question is whether the new clause is the best way to secure the clarity of guidance sought by my colleagues on the Opposition Benches.

**Mrs. Fyfe:** If the hon. Gentleman feels that we are least travelling in a direction of which he approves—even if we are not going all the way that he would want us to go—will he vote with us so that we can at least achieve some improvement in the law, or will he stick with his hon. Friends who are opposed to any change in the law? Has he read the Scottish Law Commission's statement that the current law is vague and that individual children are suffering because of that?

**Mr. Devlin:** In fact, earlier in my speech I read that part of the Scottish Law Commission's report into the record. The hon. Lady must have missed it. The current law appears to work quite well, taking into account the fact that it has to be interpreted on a case-by-case basis. I can tell her that I always endeavour to support my hon. Friend the Minister if I possibly can. I look forward with great interest to what he has to say.

**Mr. Robert Hughes:** As I have listened to the debate, I have been struck by the enormous change in climate that has occurred over the past 10 to 20 years. Had we been having this debate all those years ago, dozens of Conservative Members would have stood up not just to oppose the new clause, but vigorously to state the case for the efficiency of corporal punishment. Today, not a single Conservative Member has said that corporal punishment is the best way to enforce discipline. The hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) came closest to doing so when he referred to what happens in Singapore and said that crime there had been wiped out by the use of corporal punishment. I do not want to argue with him, but as Singapore is still using corporal punishment, it cannot be working.

6.15 pm

The hon. Gentleman also said that a section of public opinion believes that behaviour would be much better if the belt was still available in schools and if the birch—or the cane, in England—was still available as corporal punishment for misdemeanours. Those who hold that view express it vociferously, but the Scottish Law Commission takes a different view. An interesting point is that there was a tremendously higher level of violence in Glasgow in the days of the razor gangs, when corporal

punishment was routinely administered day by day in primary and secondary schools and by parents. Treating violence with violence does not work.

There appears to be a nostalgic view about the use of violence in the past. It struck me as perverse that the press should have presented the funeral of one of the Kray twins as a coming together and healing of the community. There was a suggestion that when the Krays were not in prison, but were carrying out their foul deeds on the streets of east London, it was some sort of paradise. Where does such a nostalgic view come from? I certainly do not know. The truth is that the use of violence, whether by an adult against an adult or by an adult against a child, is wrong. It cannot be justified by giving it some sort of legal respectability.

The climate has changed and it is our duty not only to take account of that, but to try to persuade people that there is a better way of enforcing discipline and a much better way of teaching children the difference between right and wrong than to try to beat sense into them.

I am not a lawyer, but when a question of law has been examined by the Scottish Law Commission I feel that, unless there are very powerful arguments to the contrary, we should support the commission's. What it wants done is quite clear; it has set it out for us. I believe that, in this case, we are duty bound to accept it. I hope that the Government will do so.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** When considering this subject, it is useful to examine the current position under the law. A parent can exercise a degree of discipline and moderate chastisement upon his or her children. However, the punishment must be moderate and reasonable in relation to its end. If it is, that constitutes a defence to a charge of cruelty to the child, to a charge of criminal assault and to a claim for damages for civil assault. Discipline is not a right in the strict sense, but a parental power or authority. There is no reason why its exercise cannot be delegated—for example, by a widow or other single mother with an unruly son—to the child's uncle or grandfather.

On the question of the United Nations convention on human rights, in no Scottish case has the exercise of disciplinary powers over children been held to contravene its prohibition, in article 3, of inhuman or degrading punishment. However, the developing jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights—although its decisions are not directly enforceable—may influence views of reasonableness.

I mentioned earlier that only reasonable and moderate chastisement is permitted. What is today acceptable punishment by parents may well be limited to slaps and the like which do not cause injury, extensive bruising or long and lasting pain. Excess definitely constitutes an assault. What constitutes excess will vary according to the circumstances of the case, including the age, sex and any known disabilities or weaknesses of the child. Factors such as the nature and context of the punishment, the manner and method of its execution, its duration and its physical and mental effects will all be taken into account.

To slap a child of any age on the face or to knock a child over is an act as remote from reasonable chastisement as anybody could possibly imagine. Punishment which is intended to cause significant physical injury or which is inflicted in disregard of a readily foreseeable risk of such injury is clearly excessive. Punishment that goes beyond the reasonable objectives of discipline and is degrading or grossly humiliating is definitely excessive. Where punishment is inflicted without any justification at all or is out of proportion to the triviality of the offence, it may be wrongful and constitute an assault although the physical results may not have been otherwise excessive. An objectionable method of punishment may also constitute excess, irrespective of whether physical harm results.

The court will not sanction as moderate or reasonable punishment which carries with it an appreciable risk of injury, even if that injury does not materialise or is not shown. In any event, it appears that there are certain methods of punishment which are to be regarded as improper and that blows to the head generally come into that category.

**Dr. Godman:** If the law is so comprehensive in protecting children from what the Minister has described as moderate or reasonable chastisement, why has the Law Commission presented the argument for reform?

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** The Law Commission provides an invaluable function, but we have a duty to examine its terms very closely. The test that I would apply is that any change in the law should not prevent the court from deciding that an excessive punishment of a child is unlawful.

I have some sympathy with the intention behind the new clause. It is my view that no violence to children should be justifiable under the guise of punishment. On the other hand, we certainly do not want to criminalise the great majority of parents who occasionally have to resort to a safe smack, if only to safeguard their unruly offspring. The law as its stands—both statutory and common law—already offers sufficient protection to children from assault by parents, teachers or others who have charge of children. We must resist new clause 1 as it may prevent the courts from arriving at the conclusion that they felt right in the circumstances.

The Law Commission, in its "Report on Family Law", discussed whether all corporal punishment should be made unlawful. It concluded—rightly in my view—that an outright ban would not have popular support, nor would it be enforceable. Instead, it recommended clarifying the law to make it unlawful to hit a child with a stick, belt or other object or in such a way as to risk causing injury, pain or discomfort lasting for more than a very short period of time. In essence, that is the principle of new clause 1. But I must make Labour Members aware that the formula that they have adopted would not necessarily achieve the objective sought.

New clause 1 would place unnecessary constraints on the power of the courts to take all the circumstances of each case into consideration. That has proved to be a key factor in recent case history. Some reports in the media of such cases may have been misleading. There was the unfortunate case of the girl whose thigh was bruised by a belt. In fact, in that case, the court did not say that it approved of belting children. It found that after taking account of all the circumstances, the act of the mother could not be categorised as criminal.

It has also been pointed out that a blow to the head of a two-year-old was found to be unreasonable. I find that entirely credible. A blow with a hand to the head may be much more dangerous for a young child than for an older

child being struck with an implement on a less sensitive part of the anatomy. A court has to take many things into account in determining if punishment is reasonable, such as age, sex and known disabilities or weaknesses, the manner and method of execution, duration and the physical and mental effects of what has occurred.

New clause 1 may limit courts to only two factors: the use of the implement and discomfort lasting more than a very short period of time. I fear that that may force a court to come to a decision that it did not feel was justified given all the circumstances of the case. It may lead to a court finding against a parent who administered a light tap with some inoffensive—

**Dr. Godman:** Will the Minister give way?

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** In a moment. It may lead to a court finding against a parent who administered a light tap with some inoffensive implement, while someone giving a much more severe blow with the hand may escape censure.

**Dr. Godman:** When were guidelines last issued to sheriffs, especially new sheriffs or temporary sheriffs—these days there seem to be more temporary sheriffs than those with security of tenure—concerning the Minister's definition of what is reasonable chastisement?

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Any excessive force against a child in any circumstances should be prohibited and could give rise to a charge of assault. My hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) raised—

**Mrs. Ewing** *rose—*

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** I want to follow through this point. My hon. Friend made a very important point when he raised the question of reasonable punishment being a defence to a charge of assault. That is an assumption on which the new clause is based. It seems to restrict that defence so that it is not available in certain circumstances, such as where a parent strikes the child with a stick. But reasonable punishment is strictly not a defence to a charge of assault. A mother who hits a child may be prosecuted for assault under common law. An essential ingredient of that crime is the existence of evil intent. The courts have held that there is no evil intent when all that the parent did was to administer reasonable punishment to the child. It is not therefore the case that the assault is established and reasonable punishment constitutes a defence. Where there is reasonable punishment, there is no assault at all. The new clause therefore appears to miss its mark entirely.

There are other technical difficulties with the new clause.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Let me develop the argument and then hon. Members may intervene if they wish. Courts would have some difficulties interpreting subsection (1)(iii) of the new clause. Under it, a parent would have no defence if the child were struck

"in such a way as to cause, or to risk causing, pain or discomfort lasting more than a very short time."

My hon. Friend the Member for Ayr asked what was a very short period of time. It would be very hard to judge that other than by subjective standards. For example, would the length depend on the seriousness of the misdemeanour? More importantly, since the test would arise where there is no injury, it is extremely hard to see how anyone could ever tell whether the pain lasted more than a very short time or, indeed, risked doing so.

Other important points concern me. What is meant by "other object"? Indeed, my hon. Friend the Member for Ayr considered whether it would be legitimate to hit a child with an Order Paper. Would it be legitimate to hit a child in the eye or to use a heavy magazine? Whenever excessive force is used, it should be prohibited and the necessary action taken.

The effect of paragraph (ii) of the new clause is not clear and I fear would do nothing to clarify the law. There are a number of deficiencies in the new clause.

**Mr. Wallace:** The Minister's response so far has been somewhat unconvincing. He seems to be saying that the new clause does not provide what he would consider to be a satisfactory solution to the problem. Given that a United Nations committee chastised the British Government earlier in the year specifically on the ground that there was no legislation in force to avoid physical punishment to children, what proposals would he see as being appropriate to deal with this area, which would meet and honour our obligations under the UN convention on the rights of the child?

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Appropriate proposals would create a situation in which the courts may consider any and every case in which excessive force against a child is used. I do not believe that the new clause helps the creation of that situation for the following reasons. It is impossible to enforce. It misses the legal point and therefore would not be effective, which I mentioned earlier. It limits the court's power to take all the facts of the case into account. It lacks objectivity as to what is a very short period of time and it categorises a gentle blow with a soft object as worse than a hard blow with a hand. For all those reasons, the new clause in its present form is defective and I recommend that the House rejects it.

**Mr. George Robertson:** This has been a considered debate in which hon. Members on both sides of the House made serious points on one of the most serious issues that the House could possibly consider, but the Minister's reply did not live up to the debate.

6.30 pm

We are talking about violence against small children. That is what we are trying to prevent. We are trying to clarify the law so that no body, and no parent, can hide behind the vagueness of the present law in order to inflict pain and injury on small children. That seems to be one of the most important issues that we could address our minds to. Quite frankly, the complacency and unconvincing nature of the Government's case would lead anyone with any objectivity outside this place to believe that they had made up their minds in advance and were simply repeating their points.

**Mr. Devlin:** Does not the hon. Gentleman agree that, while we are all seeking to protect small children from violence, the new clause will also prevent reasonable chastisement of young hooligans who are considerably older than very small children?

**Mr. Robertson:** Of course we are trying to implement the same principles. However, when hon. Members go

*[Mr. Robertson]*

through the Lobby tonight, they should consider the fact that we are about to make a judgment based on a recommendation of the Scottish Law Commission on how we can prevent physical violence against even the smallest children. That should be weighed in the balance and should persuade hon. Members on both sides of the House to support the recommendation.

I return to what I said at the beginning of my comments and make a simple elementary point. This new clause did not come from the Labour party. It has not been tabled in a partisan context. Word for word, it is the recommendation of the Scottish Law Commission. If the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) wants to make a few cheap political points about political correctness, perhaps he should consider that the accusation of political correctness—

**Mr. Gallie:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Robertson:** The hon. Gentleman should listen to the charge before he pleads guilty to it. To make an allegation of political correctness against Lord Davidson, Dr. Clive, Professor Love, Sheriff Macphail and Mr. W. A. Nimmo Smith QC is perverse in the extreme. However, it is an indication of the weakness of the case of the hon. Member for Ayr. At least the hon. Member for Ayr has the honesty to say that he has not even read the Scottish Law Commission report before he makes a decision here tonight which might save some small children from violence and which might change a law behind which negligent and evil parents might hide when it comes to a court of law.

**Mr. Gallie:** My objection to the new clause is that it does nothing for young children. The present law covers the situation, as has been acknowledged in the debate. That is the point. The new clause would simply confuse the issue.

**Mr. Robertson:** In all fairness, if I thought that that was the case, I would not support the new clause tonight. I do not believe that if the hon. Gentleman had read the Scottish Law Commission report, he would have reached that conclusion. The commission considered the issue in enormous depth and it consulted widely, here and abroad, and reached its conclusion. It stated that its proposal, which is the proposition before the House tonight, would

"draw the line at a point which could be easily explained and understood. No implement. No injury or risk of injury. No lasting pain or discomfort or risk of lasting pain or discomfort."

That is the line which those eminent lawyers and people looking at the issue arrived at. However, they have met a wall of trivia from the Government.

We are told that if someone is hit by an Order Paper or receives a light tap from an implement, there might be a risk of prosecution—as if there was no procurator fiscal service in Scotland and no public prosecutor could decide between the trivial and the real. In the past, the procurator fiscal service has had to make the judgment about what was real and proper. All that is swept aside in order to make debating points.

The Scottish Law Commission report considered the point that was made in the debate. It stated that

"A safe disciplinary smack, involving no risk of injury and no more than transient pain would be no more unlawful than it is under existing law."

The commission addressed itself to the excess referred to by the Minister. It considered the excess of some parents against small children. We have a heavy responsibility on us today as to whether we believe that the Scottish Law Commission was wrong and irrelevant and that we will simply rely on the present vagueness of the law, which has unfortunately led to some parents receiving precisely the wrong signal, or whether we accept our responsibilities, consider the commission's advice and accept that new clause 1, which enshrines the commission's wording, is something that would give the additional protection to small children.

In the face of the Government's hostility, I hope that hon. Members will decide that we should be on the side of the children and that they will vote in favour of new clause 1.

*Question put*, That the clause be read a Second time:—

*The House divided*: Ayes 193, Noes 260.

**Division No. 138]** **[6.39 pm**

**AYES**

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, Andrew F
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Boateng, Paul
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, N *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D N
Canavan, Dennis
Chisholm, Malcolm
Church, Judith
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Tom
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hardy, Peter
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley North)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jamieson, David

Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jowell, Tessa
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Liddell, Mrs Helen
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
MacShane, Denis
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon Alfred *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon John *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, Bill
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Pearson, Ian
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter L
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, Rt Hon John
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Chris *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Soley, Clive
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Winnick, David
Wray, Jimmy

**Tellers for the Ayes:**
**Mr. John Cummings and**
**Mr. Joe Benton.**

**NOES**

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(North Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browning, Mrs Angela
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ru'cliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forsyth, Rt Hon Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, Sir John
Grant, Sir A *(SW Cambs)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archibald
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lennox-Boyd, Sir Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Needham, Rt Hon Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Scott, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*

Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thumham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

**Tellers for the Noes:**
**Mr. Sydney Chapman and Dr. Liam Fox.**

*Question accordingly negatived.*

## New clause 2

AWARD OF PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES AND PARENTAL RIGHTS TO FATHER

'.—(1) Where a child's father does not have parental responsibilities or parental rights in relation to him and the mother and father have not agreed to provide for the father to have such responsibilities or rights, the father may apply to the court for such rights, provided that, unless there are exceptional circumstances he does so—

(i) no earlier than three months from the date of the child's birth; and

(ii) no later than a maximum number of years to be prescribed by the Secretary of State from the date of the child's birth if during the intervening time he had no active part in providing for or caring for the child.

(2) Before awarding parental responsibilities and parental rights under subsection (1) above, the court shall satisfy itself that arrangements are made for these rights to be exercised in such a manner as to avoid the father having knowledge of the address of the mother if she does not wish him to have such information.

(3) Where a father awarded parental responsibilities or parental rights under subsection (1) above is subsequently convicted of any offence involving violence or of any offences mentioned in Schedule 1 to the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1975 (offences against children to which special provisions apply) or in sections 2A to 2C of the Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 1976 (incest and intercourse with a child by step-parent or person in position of trust), or has had a protection order enforced against him, his parental responsibilities and parental rights will terminate, pending any further application by him to the court for the restoration of such responsibilities and rights.'.—*[Mrs. Fyfe.]*

*Brought up, and read the First time.*

**Mrs. Fyfe:** I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

I take this opportunity to mention my appreciation for the help and support freely given by my hon. Friends during the Committee which was of inestimable benefit while we were dealing with a difficult and complex issue.

To put the new clause into context, it is necessary to look at what the Bill has set out. All mothers—regardless of whether they have been married or not at any time—have parental responsibilities and rights. Few dispute that where there are rights, there must be responsibilities. Indeed, the Bill has put a new emphasis on parental responsibilities.

There is widespread agreement that rights are needed to be able to exercise responsibilities. But where there are responsibilities, there must also be safeguards. The law should come to the aid of those mothers and children who are subjected to violence, abuse and intimidation far more than it does at present.

The Bill is clear about the protection of fathers' interests. Any father married to the mother at the time of conception has automatically gained parental responsibilities and rights. An unmarried father may acquire such rights by agreement with the mother, failing which he can take his case to court. We pointed out in vain in Committee that a mother may agree under duress, and that there is no protection in the Bill to overcome that. A man and a woman can be extricated from an unwanted marriage which has been imposed under duress, but nothing can be done to overcome duress in a shared parenting agreement. We must remember that the parents involved could be very young, as the Government's own amendment No. 116 reinforces.

The Bill contains a process whereby an unmarried father can take his case to court if the mother refuses agreement. That is not in the least disputed by Opposition Members. It is right that where a father is unreasonably denied parental responsibilities and rights by the mother, the law should provide a remedy for that father. It is for the child's benefit that that should be so. I also sympathise with those anguished fathers who have written to me and who are at present denied access to the children they love. They are looking forward to restoring happy relations with their children under the provisions of the Bill, even if there is no hope of restoring good relations with the mother.

The Bill contains provisions for rights for fathers who have been unreasonably denied them. But what of those cases where the mother's disagreement is entirely fair and reasonable and where we would doubt her sanity and her sense of responsibility for her children if she agreed to share rights and responsibilities with the father? The Bill does not provide for that situation. It is no answer to say that the mother can state her case in court. It is not clear whether either party would receive legal aid in such a case, and as men generally earn a lot more than women—especially women who are bringing up children—the woman would be put at an immediate disadvantage.

The new clause seeks to provide some initial safeguards and says that unless there are exceptional circumstances, a father cannot apply to the courts any earlier than three months from the date of the baby's birth. This would safeguard the mother's interests in a similar fashion to that involved in adoption law, which allows a mother time to think and decide following the birth of her baby. It cannot seriously inconvenience the father to be made to wait for a mere three months, and many a father of a newborn baby might jocularly wish that he had no responsibility for the infant and that the mother had to carry out all of the less pleasant tasks associated with baby care.

The second provision of the clause is that, again unless there are exceptional circumstances, a father should not be able to apply to the courts if, during a number of

years—the amount of which I am happy to let the Secretary of State lay down—he has had no active part in providing or caring for the child. While safeguarding fathers who do care for their children, this provision would safeguard mothers and children from the kind of man they could well do without. What excuse could there possibly be for a father who sends no money or items in kind to help with his child's upkeep, sends no letters or cards and makes no effort to carry out his fatherly responsibilities?

In Committee, the Minister rather fancifully envisaged wandering sailors as such a case, but even sailors have access to modern communications and shore leave, which—as far as I know—has not yet been withdrawn. However, to allow for the rarer possibilities in life—a father who is sunk in a coma in a country where no one speaks English, perhaps—I have allowed for exceptional circumstances. It would be for the courts to decide if those circumstances were sufficiently exceptional.

Subsection (2) of the new clause should cause no one any difficulty. It ensures that the court must satisfy itself that when it grants parental rights and responsibilities to a father, those rights will be exercised in such a manner as to avoid the father having knowledge of the mother's whereabouts if she does not wish him to have that information.

Sadly, we learnt while the Committee was sitting of a mother who was killed by her ex-husband while their young son hid in fear. The husband had obtained her address from the reporter to the children's hearing on three separate occasions. The Minister has agreed to ensure that, in future, such information will not be disclosed during or following the children's hearing if the mother does not wish it to be disclosed. It is only logical to extend the protection of women's safety to the courts in cases such as I am discussing now.

Finally, subsection (3) of the new clause provides further and necessary protection against violence, intimidation and abuse. If a father abuses the parental responsibilities and rights which are granted to him by the court and is convicted of an offence involving violence or abuse against children or has had a protection order enforced against him, his parental rights and responsibilities will terminate pending any further application by him to the court for restoration of his responsibilities and rights.

It is as plain as the nose on anyone's face that a father who is guilty of such offences is hardly demonstrating fitness for parenthood, and the law should take account of that without delay. As matters stand, such a father could be convicted of the most appalling crimes against children or the most extreme violence against his former partner, but retain his parental rights and responsibilities until further court actions are taken—perhaps many months later. Mothers can obtain interdicts, but the kind of man about whom we are talking will as readily break his ex-partner's neck as break an interdict.

The Bill provides for parents who have responsibility for their children, regardless of marital status. But recognition of the rights of responsible and loving fathers who do not live with their children must not carry the price of added difficulties for parents who have demonstrated daily their commitment by living with the child and caring for his needs, day in and day out.

Domestic violence, unfortunately, is not rare in Scotland. Scottish Women's Aid received more than 25,000 requests for information, support and safe refuge in 1993-94. Yet the Bill makes no mention of domestic violence. If the welfare of the child is to be paramount—as I believe it should be and as the Bill rightly stresses—the law of the land must protect the rights of the child and the parent who cares for him or her from violence and abuse, and the fear of violence and abuse.

If the Government refuse to accept this new clause tonight and call upon their colleagues once again to come into the Lobby and vote it down, unheard and unexamined, it will stand to their eternal shame. I commend the new clause to the House.

**Mr. William McKelvey** (Kilmarnock and Loudoun): I rise to support new clause 2. I do so because I have studied carefully the documentation that was despatched to me from many sources, but particularly Women's Aid and Kilmarnock and Loudoun Women's Aid, an organisation with which I am often in contact, not for abusing my wife or children but because I take an interest and to assist those women who are under severe provocation from their partners.

The absence of a specific reference to domestic violence would substantially detract from the value of the Children (Scotland) Bill. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) that, if the troops are gathered simply to vote the new clause down without examining it, it will be an indictment of them.

7 pm

Abuse of women and children in society, and certainly Scottish society, is prevalent. It is a matter of concern to all women and all children and it should be of concern to all Members of Parliament. At present, there are almost twice as many children as women in Women's Aid refuges in Scotland. The best interests of those children must be paramount in law. That has been said throughout the proceedings on the Bill.

The experience of Women's Aid in Scotland clearly shows that the breakdown in contact between many fathers and their children is due largely to disinterest on the part of the father or the level of fear created by his abuse of either the wife or the children or, in some cases, both. I am speaking on this occasion about those violent husbands who abuse their wives and children. I am not talking about those husbands who look after the interests of their wife and children but who, for whatever reason, have decided to separate honourably. Their rights are still protected. I think that all of us would agree with that.

The Women's Aid network in Scotland supports the new clause tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Maryhill. The new clause seeks to limit the period within which a father can exercise his right to apply to a court for parental rights. That is quite proper. It seeks to maintain the confidentiality of the address at which a woman resides, if she does not wish the father to have such information. Many Members of Parliament know about the difficulties caused at women's refuges when the husband secures the address at which his wife or former wife is staying and goes to the premises to create a commotion or abuse her.

Scottish Women's Aid supports the new clause, first because it would restrict fathers' rights to claim parental rights after an unduly long absence and, secondly, because

it would increase the safety of women and children where they have escaped domestic abuse and the father has access rights. My hon. Friend the Member for Maryhill said that the new clause might help to guard against future fatalities such as that of Jacqueline McFetvich, who was killed last year by her abusive husband after her address was released on not one but three occasions by the reporter to the children's panel.

It is vital that the connection between abuse and parental rights be enshrined in law to the effect that, where abuse occurs, evidence of which would result in a conviction or a protection order, parental rights will go into abeyance. The father will be required to reapply to the court to reinstate those rights under the conditions outlined.

I take this opportunity to explain that I did not have the opportunity or privilege to serve on the Standing Committee which considered the Bill. Due to some recorded mistake, many people have written to me under the impression that I was a member of the Committee. I have to advise them that I did not serve on the Standing Committee, although I chaired the meetings of the Special Standing Committee which took evidence on the Bill. I understand that, by protocol, that does not exclude me from speaking in the debate tonight. I wanted to put that matter on the record lest some of my constituents might think that I served on a Committee in which I never uttered a word. That, of course, would be unforgivable as well as unforgettable.

**Mr. Connarty:** I commend my hon. Friend the Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey) for the way in which he chaired the Special Standing Committee. It was my first experience of such a Committee. I believe that not many hon. Members who serve on Committees which consider Bills have the experience of taking evidence from the public. Many organisations wrote to us. Many could not be called, because there were too many. The sessions that we held were eased by the chairmanship of my hon. Friend. So his contribution was great, although he was not a member of the Standing Committee which considered the Bill and therefore did not take part in the debates on the clauses.

I also commend my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) for bringing the clause back to the House. We missed such an opportunity in the Committee. If we did not create even this small door to be opened to the possibility of joint parenting agreements by application to the courts, we would not have a chance to restore some of the missed opportunities.

In England and Wales, under section 1 of the Children Act 1989, only 5,000 agreements in any year are signed between the mother and the unmarried father of a child, under which the father is given responsibility for the child. That has grown from 2,500. As I said in Committee, one of the reasons for the low number of agreements is that people think that when they jointly register a child at birth, they automatically assume joint parental responsibility. The reality is that fathers have no rights and, more important, no responsibilities for the child apart from those which the Child Support Agency might eventually slap on them. Fathers think that they have rights because they have gone along with the mother to register the birth of the child. So we have a chance to introduce some joint responsibility in subsection (1) of new clause 2.

Some 30 per cent. of children in Scotland are born outside a married relationship, so there is probably a large number of children at this moment who have no father with a clear responsibility for them and whose father will have no clear responsibility or rights when the Bill becomes statute. I deeply regret that. For the good of our nation, I hope that some Government bolder than this one will take the opportunity to put it into law that when people have joint parenthood, they have joint responsibilities and rights and they are excluded from those rights only by some act of either omission or commission which makes them unfit to take those rights.

I welcome subsection (1) of the new clause. It allows a father who is serious and sincere, and who has been excluded from parental rights perhaps because there have been tensions or acrimony between the mother and the father, to go to court and apply for those rights. The idea that it should not be done early in the life of the child is to be commended because in those months the mother is under tremendous stress. She may be in hospital; she may be in contact with the hospital and doctors for three months and more. Three months seems a reasonable period of application. Some would argue that the period should be longer, until the mother has got over any problems with post-natal depression or any problems with the child. After that, she can cope with an application to share responsibility when the couple may have broken up their relationship.

In Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) used the word "waster" to describe the type of father who is apathetic. That is the word used by the Women's Aid organisation about fathers who go away and return on some opportunistic basis, thinking that they would like to have the ready-made family that their partner or former wife has brought up. They claim rights as if they were claiming back a possession. Those people should clearly be forbidden from coming back and demanding rights in that way. That was the intention of my hon. Friend the Member for Maryhill in drafting the new clause in the way that she has.

The idea that fathers should have no knowledge of the address of the mother is important. It is the children who have rights. I have argued all along and continue to argue, and many enlightened organisations correctly argue, that the child should have the right to see both parents. No adults, because of their acrimony to another—unless the other person has been violent or abusive to them or to the children—should deny children that right. I hope that in that spirit the Government will see that we are trying to provide an open door.

Subsection (2), which says that the father should have no knowledge of the mother's address, deals with the concern that there should be no need to contact the former parent. The parent should not be made to come into contact with a former parent whom she does not want to see. That happens in a few cases. We must think and the Government must think about how to do that better. As it is the child and the parent who have the contact, it should not be a trauma for the residential parent. The residential parent should not have to go to a place where it might be necessary to come in contact with the parent who wishes to see the child. It is a question not just of no knowledge

but of ensuring that there is no forced contact or contact by error because I think that it was an error that caused the death which we heard about in Committee.

**Dr. Godman:** I am listening closely to my hon. Friend. He spoke about access. Does he agree that we frequently come across cases in which an absent parent's access to a child is supervised by a social worker or some other person in a place that is away from where the child is living with his mother?

**Mr. Connarty:** That is a useful intervention because it shows the Government that there is already good practice in this area. The social work department or some other body, although in Scotland it is mainly the social work department, is responsible for uplifting the child and taking him to a mutually acceptable environment. It is important that children are not taken to cold, dank halls in which there is a physical barrier between them and the second parent who comes to see them. The environment should be such that the child and the second parent have genuine access and contact. Even if they are not supervised all the time, the responsibility for bringing the child to the place of contact should certainly lie with a third party unless the residential parent is capable and willing to meet and make contact with the father.

Subsection (3) of the new clause is about positive parenting. The purpose of the new clause is to show the Government that if parental responsibility were automatically shared it would safeguard the residential partner, in the main the woman, from any form of contact with an unsuitable person. All the issues that are outlined in subsection (3) are reasons why a parent should be kept away from the family that he has abused, threatened or committed violence against. Such people should be prevented from re-establishing contact with the child.

These 40 pages of amendments were stuck down on Friday for debate today. To act in that a way on a Bill of such magnitude and importance shows that the Government are half-hearted about what they are trying to do. They are tied up with bureaucratic difficulties and missing fantastic opportunities to use the UN convention on the rights of the child and enact useful and expansive legislation for children.

The new clause puts children first because my hon. Friend the Member for Maryhill has obviously focused on the child. It is interesting to note that the organisation in Scotland which used to be called the Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children is now called Children First. It has got the message but it appears that the Government have not. However, if they at least accept this new clause there will be a slight lowering of the barriers that the Government's myopic, weak and half-hearted thinking have put in the way of the kind of legislation that we thought we would get when we set out on this journey so many months ago.

**Mr. Wallace:** I support the new clause, which should automatically commend itself to the Government. It promotes responsibility because, when a father applies to the court, it is to acquire not only rights in respect of the child but responsibilities. I am sure that every hon. Member has had plenty of correspondence over the past year or more from fathers who were being pursued by the Child Support Agency, many of whom were exercising responsibility through what they were paying for their children.

But responsibility is far more than money, although I am the first to accept that resources and money can go a long way towards improving a family's life style and helping in other ways. There are other responsibilities, many of which are set out in the Bill.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) has struck the right balance in her new clause. It would not apply to cases in which there is agreement between the parties, and provision for such agreement is set out in clause 4 of the Bill. It would relate to a situation in which there has been some reason for blocking the father's attempts to exercise rights and responsibilities in relation to the child. Therefore, the provision to ensure that an application to the court is not made prematurely while a mother is recovering from childbirth—

**Dr. Godman:** The hon. Gentleman has a vast knowledge of Scottish law, and may be able to help me. When a father makes such an application to a court, presumably the estranged wife or partner would have the right to challenge it. Would she be able to have recourse to legal aid?

**Mr. Wallace:** Although the clause does not refer to that, I automatically assumed that the mother would have a right of challenge and would be entitled to apply for legal aid.

Provision is made for the address of the mother to be kept from the father when serving the action. I am not sure how that would work in practice because the father would take the initiative, and it is difficult to know how he could serve the action if he did not have knowledge of the mother's address. However, I am sure that court rules could get round that. The intention is proper, and there should be the will to try to find the legal and procedural means to put the intention into practice.

My final point relates to subsection (3). We have had representations from Scottish Women's Aid, which says that, in many cases, an application by a father who may have been absent for some time can be made purely to try to renew abuse or perpetrate some psychological harm. Clearly that is not the intention of the new clause, and the provision in subsection (3) is important to give protection in circumstances where a father seeks to abuse legal procedures.

7.15 pm

**Dr. Godman:** I doubt whether the new clause will be accepted. I asked the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) whether the estranged partner or wife of a man making an application could challenge it. If she could, and if she had a low income, I take it that she would be able to receive legal aid. Many women constituents of mine who have had to seek refuge from violent partners or husbands have been on low incomes and faced all kinds of problems.

I listened carefully to my hon. Friend the Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey). I happily support the new clause; women have to be protected. It is essential that the address of a refuge should not be divulged to a partner who has committed violence or where the woman has a genuine fear that violence may be inflicted upon her.

Cases in which the address of a refuge has been given to an estranged partner cause me considerable concern. Not long ago, I interviewed a young woman at my surgery

*[Dr. Godman]*

who had been subjected to the most appalling violence by her partner. I am not sure that he is psychopathic, but it is very strange that he should inflict such violence on a young woman. At the same time, he has shown only love and affection for his children, who have suffered no violence. The poor young wife has been the victim of his wild, senseless acts of violence.

Where women need to seek refuge, it is essential that they be protected. Many refuges have no security, and once the partner has discovered the address, he can put the fear of God not only into his wife or partner but into other women in the refuge, especially if he turns up at night. I know of one refuge, the address of which was given out readily to husbands who had rightly been deserted by their wives, who were in fear not only of their own lives but of those of their children.

Although a father should have parental responsibilities and rights, it is essential that the woman concerned has the right to seek protection against him, especially, as subsection (3) states, where he has been

"convicted of any offence involving violence or any offences mentioned in Schedule 1 to the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1975 (offences against children to which special provisions apply)".

As I said in an intervention in the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Connarty), it is possible to give violent fathers supervised access to their children without revealing the children's address, unless the children unwittingly give the game away and reveal the address to their parents.

Two constituents of mine can see their children only at a place designated by the social worker responsible for the care of the children concerned. Both the mother and father can see their children only in the company of the senior social worker responsible for the case. My hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, East expressed concern that such meetings should not lead to the revealing of the address where the children are staying. That is perfectly manageable, given the sensible and sympathetic intervention of, say, a social worker.

If the Government will not accept new clause 2, they have a duty to take those concerns on board, particularly in respect of women who have had to seek refuge. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun. I occasionally visit the office of the women who run Inverclyde Women's Aid in West Blackall street in Greenock. The last time that I was in that office, they were receiving calls from Lanarkshire, Grampian and Aberdeen.

Just before I left, a call came in from Cornwall, where a woman with two children needed desperately to put as many miles as she could between herself and her children and her violent partner. So the Women's Aid offices in Inverclyde and Kilmarnock do not deal just with local women, but are often called on to protect women and their children from all points of the compass. It is therefore essential that reporters and others do not reveal the location of refuges. Those who have done so in the past are guilty of irresponsibility towards those women and their children.

I am keen to hear what the Minister will say in rejecting the new clause. My concern is for the children and their mothers who must seek refuge in the growing number of refuges in Scotland and elsewhere.

**Mr. Chisholm:** The rights and responsibilities of unmarried fathers have been one of the more contentious aspects of the Bill, not least among organisations representing single parents. As most of those organisations have now arrived at a consensus on the new clause, I hope that the Minister will acknowledge that by accepting it. I suppose that the reason for the disagreement is that the rights of fathers, mothers and children do not always coincide, and ultimately, a balance must be struck.

The Bill advances the rights of fathers through the provision of voluntary agreements with mothers on joint rights and responsibilities. I hope that the Government will widely advertise that provision, so that the large number of couples who are not married but have a stable relationship can readily enter into such an agreement.

Nevertheless, we cannot just accept that all fathers should automatically have those rights. A child born of rape is merely the most extreme instance of how unsatisfactory that would be. Sometimes, a father's rights can conflict with a child's rights—for example, in the case of a father who has treated his child unsatisfactorily.

A constituent recently told me that the court had ruled that her child's father was to be allowed see her child, but that the child, who was five years old, had not seen that stranger before, and suddenly had to start going out with a strange adult every week. Such cases are sometimes not taken into account. I do not say that that father should not have the right to see his child, but the rights and feelings of the child should have been taken into account in the court order. Subsection (1)(ii), which mentions the time interval, takes that consideration into account. That is relevant to the child as well as to the mother.

Consideration of the time interval is becoming more common. One of the side effects of the Child Support Act 1991 is that some fathers who have never taken an interest in their children are saying, "If I must provide financially, why shouldn't I see the child?" Sometimes it is not for the best of motives, but to get at the mother. The new clause takes the time interval on board.

More commonly, a father's rights may conflict with those of the mother. The new clause seeks to protect the mother's rights, and makes three specific proposals.

First, where there is disagreement, a father should not apply for parental rights too soon after the birth. Three months is a modest proposal. We could have proposed a longer period, but I hope that we can all agree on three months.

I hope that the reasons are obvious to the Minister. My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) had to spell out the reasons in Committee, as she was one of the few women on the Committee. In the first three months after giving birth, a mother obviously has more important things on her mind.

The second proposal is that the mother should have the right to have her place of abode kept secret. The reasons for that are obvious.

The third and most serious proposal, which responds to a genuine worry of many women's and single-parent organisations, is to terminate the rights of a father who is violent. The provisions of subsection (3) go at least some way to meeting that objective. Some people want the provision strengthened to cover fathers suspected of violence. As it stands, no one can say that the provision is not fair to men, because a conviction is required.

People who were worried about some of the Bill's provisions have united around the new clause, and I hope that the Minister will accept it accordingly.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** This has been a useful debate. First, I shall answer the point made by the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) about legal aid. Any party to an action to obtain parental responsibilities and rights can apply for legal aid, and will obtain it if he or she satisfies the usual tests.

The most important point raised in the debate was concern over the safety of women, especially battered women, in refuges. Although I shall oppose new clause 2 on technical grounds, we shall consider an amendment to allow a mother to apply to the court to have her details kept confidential. However, it would be for the court to consider that in all the circumstances of the case.

In respect of whether the woman could oppose or contest any action, the normal rules of procedure will apply, and the application will be served on the mother or would be brought to her attention so that she could oppose it.

The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) asked how an application would be served and whether the normal rules of court would apply if the address of the mother were to be withheld from the applicant. It would be necessary to provide that the rules of court could make arrangements for bringing the application to the mother's notice. As I have said, we will consider the matter further.

**Dr. Godman:** I was pleased to hear of the Minister's proposed amendment in respect of a court deciding whether a woman's address should be divulged. In the time leading up to the court case, would the address of the woman involved be confidential?

7.30 pm

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** We shall consider the issue and all its implications, and the hon. Gentleman's point is a key implication.

The difficulty with new clause 2 is that it would place time limits on when a father can exercise his right to apply to the court for parental responsibilities and rights. It would also place a duty on the court to prevent the father from finding out the address of the mother, and also to require the father to reapply for parental responsibilities following any conviction.

Although I have considerable sympathy for the objectives of hon. Members in putting forward such a new clause, I am not convinced that it is necessary. Under the terms of clause 11, any person claiming an interest in the child can apply to the court for parental responsibilities and rights. In considering whether to make such an order, the court will have regard to the welfare of the child as its paramount consideration.

New clause 2(1) would restrict the circumstances in which a father who is not and has not been married to the child's mother could apply. We believe that the only cases in which a genetic father or mother should be prevented from having access to the courts for this purpose are in the circumstances described by the House of Lords in their decision in re D on 9 March 1995, and in analogous circumstances where parental rights and responsibilities have been extinguished by a court. That is achieved by Government amendment No. 127.

In other cases, we believe that it would be difficult, having regard to international obligations, to have a provision that prevents a genetic parent from applying for such an order at any time. I therefore think it would be preferable to allow the genetic parent to apply, but to leave it to the court to determine whether to make an order in all the circumstances of the case.

I am not persuaded that subsection (2) is appropriately drafted. It is not clear whether it envisages that a court would inquire into whether the mother wishes that the father should not have knowledge of her address in every case. I think that that would go too far.

In any event, it would not be practicable for the court to be satisfied that the mother's address would not become known to the father. The court could not necessarily control all the circumstances in which such information might be made known to the father, including by innocent third parties such as the children themselves. I have said that we will look at the issue with a view to considering it further for the next stage of the Bill, although I do not think that subsection (2) is appropriately expressed in its present form.

Finally, it seems discriminatory that new clause 2(3) should deprive the unmarried father automatically of parental rights and responsibilities in the event of a conviction as described, but to make no such provision in relation to the married father—or, indeed, the mother. Arguably, any person with parental responsibilities should be treated equally in relation to the possible risk to the child should he or she incur such a conviction.

For those reasons, I would ask the House to reject new clause 2.

**Mrs. Fyfe:** I thank my hon. Friends who made important and valuable points in the debate.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey) mentioned the direct experience disclosed to hon. Members by Scottish Women's Aid. Only that organisation has daily experience of dealing with the sort of problems that we are discussing.

My hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Connarty) rightly pointed out that joint registration of births is not widely taken up. It is taken up by very few indeed. That is an important aspect that we should consider in terms of ensuring that both parents have responsibility for the child.

We must allow for fathers to overcome unreasonable objections by mothers, and the Bill at least provides a safeguard for fathers in that position. But it is surely right to try to protect the interests of mothers who are being unreasonably put upon by the fathers.

As some hon. Members have said—I have some sympathy for this argument—three months from the date of the child's birth is possibly a little on the short side. I would happily let it go longer than that. The Minister objected that any length of time is objectionable, because it would interfere with the father's rights. He said nothing about the mother's right not to be persecuted in that way. She might still be lying in a hospital maternity bed, suffering from the mental and physical after-effects of the birth—or possibly from post-natal depression. In any case, it is only reasonable that the law should take account of that, as it does in respect of adoption.

*[Mrs. Fyfe]*

It has been pointed out that I was one of the few women on the Standing Committee. Indeed, I could point out that I was the only mother on the Committee, the only person with direct experience of what it is like in the days immediately after a child is born. It says something about our legislature that there are so few women, mothers or otherwise, able to take part in considering legislation in the discussion of which I should have thought such direct experience could play a useful part.

I am grateful to my hon. Friends who have come to support the debate. It is noticeable that, from the Government side, not a single Back Bencher took the opportunity to take part in the debate. Indeed, for most of it, the Government Benches have been as empty as they could be, with the bare minimum of hon. Members on them. That will be noticed by women up and down the country and by the sort of good, decent, honourable men who want the law to serve both women and men fairly and well.

I thank the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) for his support. We can take up the point about the wife's address in this way. It is very possible that a former partner looking to exercise rights and responsibilities after the passing of many years could find out the wife's address, but she might quickly remove herself from that address to avoid contact with him.

The Minister said that it might be difficult to ensure that the husband or ex-partner never acquires the address. That is not a sensible objection, because, while the husband or ex-partner might find out by other means, the law should ensure that at least no one in court will give the information away. A simple request by the woman involved that she does not want the information to be given should be sufficient if she has reasonable grounds to fear for her safety and that of the child. Of course the information can be given away in another way, but that did not stop the Minister saying that he would provide similar safeguards in the case of children's hearings. By the same logic, he should support this proposal.

I am glad that the Minister will further consider the matter. I am disappointed that he is nevertheless going to reject new clause 2 on the grounds that he has stated, because subsection (1) restricts the father's rights only in the most reasonable and tiny way possible. If he feels that new clause 2(3) should go further, I would agree.

My hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) spoke of the reality in the refuges. I wish that there were more women in the Chamber now who had that direct experience; I do not have it. I was fortunate enough to be married to a man who never dreamed of treating either me or the children violently or abusively. That is, of course, the experience of the vast majority of women.

It would do the House and the country good if the experience of women in refuges could be described in the Chamber. Unfortunately, such experience is lacking. We who are here have to try to speak up for those who are not here to speak for themselves. We have tried to do that, and it is a shame and a disgrace that the Government are not more responsive tonight.

*Question put,* That the clause be read a Second time:—

*The House divided:* Ayes 193, Noes 258.

**Division No. 139]** **[7.39 pm**

**AYES**

Adams, Mrs Irene
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, Andrew F
Benton, Joe
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D N
Canavan, Dennis
Chisholm, Malcolm
Church, Judith
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Cox, Tom
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley North)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jamieson, David
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd South West)*
Jowell, Tessa
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Liddell, Mrs Helen
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
MacShane, Denis
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll & Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Rt Hon Alfred *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon John *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, Bill
O'Neill, Martin

Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Pearson, Ian
Pike, Peter L
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, Rt Hon John
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs Barbara
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Chris *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Soley, Clive
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

**Tellers for the Ayes:**
**Mr. Robert Ainsworth and Mr. Stephen Byers.**

**NOES**

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(North Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browning, Mrs Angela
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ru'cliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Rt Hon Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Grant, Sir A *(SW Cambs)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archibald
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lennox-Boyd, Sir Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Needham, Rt Hon Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Wavsney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen

Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

**Tellers for the Noes:**
**Dr. Liam Fox and**
**Mr. David Willetts.**

*Question accordingly negatived.*

## New clause 3

OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES

'.—(1) Where any person, court or children's hearing makes any decision in a matter affecting a child, the welfare of the child throughout his childhood shall be their or its paramount consideration, and they shall have regard in particular to—

(a) the views of the child concerned, taking account of his age and maturity, where it is practicable to ascertain such views and the child wishes to express them, and

(b) the general principle that any delay in determining matters relating to a child is likely to prejudice the welfare of the child.

(2) Without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (a) of subsection (1) above, a child of 12 years of age or more shall be presumed to be of sufficient age and maturity to form a view.

(3) A court or children's hearing shall not make any order under this Act unless it considers that it would be better for the child that the order be made than that none should be made at all.

(4) The Secretary of State may by regulations make provision for the procedures to be applied in identifying children who wish to express views to the children's hearing or court, and in facilitating that expression, and without prejudice to the generality of this section, such regulations may provide for—

(a) a psychological assessment of a child to assess his ability to form views and his maturity;

(b) representation of the child's interests in any proceedings by persons drawn from the panel referred to in section 87 of this Act, and

(c) representation of the child's views by a solicitor.'.—*[Mr. Wallace.]*

*Brought up, and read the First time.*

**Mr. Wallace:** I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** With this, it will be convenient to discuss Government amendments Nos. 154 and 153.

**Mr. Wallace:** The new clause to which this one relates was considered in Committee and concerned what were generally referred to throughout the Committee stage—including the evidence taking—as overarching principles. The idea was that the Bill should include, almost as its starting point, a set of principles that would apply to all parts of the Bill, especially those relating to decisions affecting children taken by courts, children's hearings, local authorities and so on.

I tabled the new clause immediately after the Committee ended to ensure that the whole House could return to this important matter. Without making any commitment in Committee—he said that he would have to be sure that the Bill would be improved and strengthened by any additions—the Under-Secretary of State said that the matter would be given some consideration, adding that my aim was a fine one:

"We will be prepared to reconsider the issue to determine whether the Bill can be improved and strengthened without imposing unnecessary rigidity . . . It will involve quite a lot of work as the options will have to be examined very carefully and weighed up. We will return to the option which provides the most advantages to children."—[*Official Report, Special Standing Committee*, 23 February 1995; c. 288-89.]

One can only assume that the matter has been given serious thought, that all the difficulties have been weighed up and that the Government have concluded that it is better to do nothing. That is a matter of some regret to me, but I am at least glad that I tabled the new clause to give the House the opportunity to consider the matter further.

The rights of the child are set out in the new clause. They were referred to at some length in Committee, and have been mentioned again this evening. They are: that bodies making decisions affecting children shall have regard to

"the views of the child concerned, taking account of his age and maturity . . . and the general principle that any delay in determining matters relating to a child"

should be avoided; and further, that the interests and welfare of the child should be paramount.

I acknowledge that it might be objected that the words "any person" should not form part of the new clause. If the Minister tells me that that is the only technical flaw preventing him from accepting the new clause, I shall not push it to a vote. But if the Government's objections are more fundamental—and they do not believe that there is a need for an overarching set of principles enshrined in the Bill—I would urge the House to come to a decision on the matter.

In legislation relating to Northern Ireland and to England a series of overarching principles are enshrined at the very heart of the provisions. The Government have argued in the past that these overarching principles are specifically imported to certain parts of the Bill, but in many other parts the important principles are missing. Clause 3(5), relating to parental responsibilities and parental rights, includes no reference to the views of the child or the child's welfare. The same can be said of clause 4(1). Clause 5 contains no reference to children's views, and in clause 6 the very principle is abrogated, inasmuch as a failure to take into account the views of children will not constitute a barrier to certain transactions being legitimated.

Clause 9 contains nothing about children's welfare. Clause 11(6) stipulates that

"any order . . . does not adversely affect the position of a person who has, in good faith and for value, acquired any property of the child concerned".

Where do children's views or welfare appear in that? Clause 14, entitled

"Jurisdiction and choice of law in relation to certain matters",

includes no reference to delays that may adversely affect children. I could go on taking samples at random. In clause 35(2), which concerns safeguarders, there is nothing about children's views or welfare, or about undue delays in making appointments.

I could more amply illustrate the point if the House wanted to stay here half the night—we could have added a good many more examples of failures to provide for the taking into account of children's views, to ensure that their welfare is paramount, or to avoid undue delay in coming to decisions. Hence the need for a general clause to ensure that all decisions to be taken by courts, children's hearings or local authorities be taken by reference to these principles. That is why such a fundamental provision should be incorporated in the Bill.

I find Government amendment No. 154 objectionable. The Minister will well recall that there was a great deal of objection in Committee to the provision to be found in clause 17(5), which allows the Secretary of State, if he considers it necessary,

"to give directions to a local authority as to the exercise of their powers"

and to override the best interests of the child. That is a matter that the House should not lightly countenance. The Government must justify the extension of the provision to clause 16, which would be the effect of Government amendment No. 154. The amendment states:

"If, for the purpose of protecting members of the public from serious harm . . . (a) a children's hearing . . . (b) a court"

may decide that the paramountcy of the welfare and best interests of the child can be overridden. The Minister should advise the House of the circumstances in which he thinks it would be legitimate for a children's hearing or a court to make a disposal that did not put the best interests of the child first. The proposal is a serious breach of a principle that has been the subject of common consent throughout the Bill's passage. To extend the proposal when the Minister knew that there was considerable opposition to what was already in the Bill is a serious development and one that the Government must justify, and not on the basis that it is a fall-back provision that might be needed in future.

8 pm

It has already been said that at the heart of the Bill is an obligation to fulfil the undertakings that were made when the Government signed the United Nations convention on the rights of the child. Articles 2, 3, 6 and 12 of the convention reflect the principles that are set out in the new clause. When the Secretary of State moved the Bill's Second Reading in the Scottish Grand Committee, he said that the measure was based on the principles contained in the convention. The White Paper states:

"Legislation, policy and practice all need to be founded on these clear principles."

Surely the Government have no objection to importing the principles clearly and unequivocally into the Bill.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** When we discussed these matters in Committee the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) did not press his new clause when I undertook to examine whether the main principles that run through the Bill could be gathered into a general statement and inserted in the Bill. We examined the proposition carefully. We examined the merits in detail of adding such a general statement, applying some serious tests. For example, we considered whether such a statement would preserve rather than confuse the duties and obligations set out in the Bill, whether it would create new duties and obligations, whether it could sensitively convey the exceptions and qualifications that are applied to paramountcy, for example, and whether it could convey the policies behind the Bill that are necessary for its effective operation. Finally, and most significant, we considered whether the addition of a general statement would improve the Bill.

Our examination led us to the conclusion that a statement of overarching principles would add to the length of the Bill—just how much would depend on the legal enforceability of the statement—without any very clear benefit in terms of substance. The Bill embodies principles, and although I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's motives I must say that his new clause well illustrates the pitfalls of constructing a general statement.

For example, the new clause, in setting out a principle about delay, does not relate to the time scales that apply to children's cases throughout part II or to the detailed procedural requirements prescribed in the children's hearings and sheriff court rules. The new clause shows the practical problems that face us. I appreciate, however, the value of providing public information to explain both the themes and principles behind legislation, which is necessarily complex, to establish clear duties, powers and rights in relation to children.

We think that the purpose that the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland has in mind could be more effectively met by an explanatory but concise document publicising the Bill between enactment and implementation, which would outline its themes and principles and explain clearly where they are applied in the Bill. Such a document would not be an alternative Bill. It would be an aid to the understanding for all those who have reason to make use of the Bill's provisions.

**Dr. Godman:** Is it common practice for sheriffs and judges to seek to interview children privately where appropriate in cases involving what I might describe as warring parents? Do judges and sheriffs take it upon themselves to seek the views of children in such cases?

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** It is not unknown for that to happen. Considerable discretion rests with the court, where there is anxiety, not to alarm or distress the child. I shall note the point that the hon. Gentleman has made and make inquiries.

I hope that, with the undertaking that I have given to consider preparation of a public information document, the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland will be prepared not to press the new clause to a Division.

**Mr. Wallace:** The Minister has said that some consideration was given to the making of a general statement. What consideration was given to parallel provisions in the Children Act 1989 and in legislation relating to Northern Ireland? What was it that the Government found attractive in incorporating a clause relating to overarching principles for England, Wales and Northern Ireland? Why do they find it a drawback to do so in legislation that bears on children in Scotland?

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** If the hon. Gentleman reads the Bill as a whole, he will find that we are somewhat ahead of the Children Act 1989, which applies south of the border, in many respects. The Bill already incorporates the general principle that the courts, children's hearings and local authorities should regard the welfare of the child as paramount. That is set out in clauses 11, 16, 17 and 83. It provides that the views of children should be taken into account by parents on major decisions affecting their lives and should be involved in decisions taken by courts and children's hearings. That is set out in clauses 6, 11, 16 and 83. The Bill sets out that children's hearings and courts should be satisfied that making a supervision requirement or order is better than making no supervision requirement or order. That is to be found in clauses 11 and 16.

*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]*

Strong general principles are incorporated in the Bill. Having examined the hon. Gentleman's proposal thoroughly, we believe that if we were to go down the path that the hon. Gentleman has suggested no clear benefit would ensue.

I move on to Government amendments Nos. 154 and 153, which are a response to the undertaking that I gave to consider the strong criticisms made in Committee of clause 17(5)(b). The paragraph was designed very much as a long-stop power, which the Secretary of State might use in exceptional circumstances where for any reason an authority was unable or unwilling to exercise the power set out in paragraph (a) to set aside the paramountcy principle in attempting to deal effectively with a serious situation created by a difficult youngster whom it was looking after. Having weighed the strong arguments with care, we propose removal of the power for the Secretary of State. I hope that the House will accept amendment No. 153.

**Dr. Godman:** Before the Minister resumes his place—

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** I am not sitting down yet.

Amendment No. 154, which the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland criticised so strongly, is linked with amendment No. 153 and makes an important addition that is designed to protect members of the public from serious harm from young people who may have shown destructive or violent behaviour to others. The amendment confers on children's hearings and the courts discretion to set aside the principle of paramountcy of the child's welfare in dealing with occasional difficult cases. It complements logically the derogation from paramountcy that is available to local authorities in dealing with a child whom they are looking after. The amendment provides through children's hearings and courts a protection that the public have every right to expect. The exception is a young person who is displaying destructive and intimidating behaviour that could lead to substantial damage to another person.

**Dr. Godman:** The Minister talked about the publication of a public information document and I for one would welcome such a booklet, but is he in a position to confirm that a similar booklet has been published dealing with child abduction? He will recall that in Committee I asked him precisely that question. Scots need to go to the Lord Chancellor's Department in London for such a booklet. The Minister promised me that an identical booklet would be published to give information north of the border. Has it been published?

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** I do not think that it has, but the hon. Gentleman will appreciate that we shall take forward these matters as soon as possible.

I can answer in a little more detail the hon. Gentleman's earlier question about the sheriff seeking the views of the child. Sheriffs and judges will deal with each case according to the particular circumstances. Existing procedural rules allow for the sheriff to call for reports, which would incorporate the child's views. On occasion, sheriffs seek the child's views in an informal environment. That is what the hon. Gentleman has been appealing for in legislation for many years. Sheriffs can, in appropriate cases, also appoint a curator ad litem to the child. All those matters are well in hand.

**Mr. Wallace:** I am disappointed with the Minister's response. I am sure that the matter has been considered, but I do not honestly think that he has made a persuasive case for not pushing the new clause to a vote. He said that inserting such a clause would make the Bill unduly long. It is quite a long Bill, but the clause is not so long. In fact, it is not as long as some of the Government's new clauses that we have debated this evening.

Perhaps the Minister is suggesting that if we did not have the new clause he would be prepared to go through the Bill clause by clause in another place and fill the gaps, which I started to outline in the list from which I was reading. Indeed, if he was to give me an assurance that the Government would be prepared to do that and apply the main principles to each provision, that might be one way to make progress.

I do not think that anyone is necessarily reassured that a glossy publication will in some way fill the gap. It would have no status in law. Glossy publications were sent out to explain the poll tax, but they did not make it function effectively or make it a good measure. I cannot accept that that is in any way a satisfactory solution for something as fundamental as trying to ensure that, in all parts, our obligations under the United Nations convention are observed. Therefore, I invite right hon. and hon. Members to support the new clause in the Lobby.

*Question put*, That the clause be read a Second time:—

*The House divided*: Ayes 80, Noes 232.

**Division No. 140]** **[8.12 pm**

**AYES**

| | |
|---|---|
| Adams, Mrs Irene | Hanson, David |
| Alton, David | Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)* |
| Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy | Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)* |
| Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)* | Illsley, Eric |
| Barnes, Harry | Jamieson, David |
| Barron, Kevin | Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)* |
| Bennett, Andrew F | Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)* |
| Brown, N *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)* | Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)* |
| Byers, Stephen | Khabra, Piara S |
| Cabom, Richard | Kirkwood, Archy |
| Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)* | Lewis, Terry |
| Campbell-Savours, D N | Liddell, Mrs Helen |
| Canavan, Dennis | Lynne, Ms Liz |
| Chisholm, Malcolm | McAllion, John |
| Clapham, Michael | McAvoy, Thomas |
| Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)* | Macdonald, Calum |
| Connarty, Michael | McFall, John |
| Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)* | McKelvey, William |
| Dalyell, Tam | Maclennan, Robert |
| Darling, Alistair | McMaster, Gordon |
| Davidson, Ian | Mahon, Alice |
| Dewar, Donald | Marshall, David *(Shettleston)* |
| Dixon, Don | Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)* |
| Donohoe, Brian H | Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)* |
| Dunnachie, Jimmy | Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon |
| Ewing, Mrs Margaret | Olner, Bill |
| Foster, Don *(Bath)* | Pike, Peter L |
| Fyfe, Maria | Prentice, Bridget *(Lew'm E)* |
| Galbraith, Sam | Prescott, Rt Hon John |
| Gerrard, Neil | Reid, Dr John |
| Godman, Dr Norman A | Rendel, David |
| Golding, Mrs Llin | Robertson, George *(Hamilton)* |
| Graham, Thomas | Rooney, Terry |
| Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)* | Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)* |
| Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)* | Salmond, Alex |

Sedgemore, Brian
Skinner, Dennis
Soley, Clive
Spellar, John
Steinberg, Gerry
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Welsh, Andrew
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

**Tellers for the Ayes:**
**Mr. James Wallace and Mrs. Ray Michie.**

**NOES**

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(North Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browning, Mrs Angela
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ru'cliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Rt Hon Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Grant, Sir A *(SW Cambs)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archibald
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Hawkins, Nick
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Robert G *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lennox-Boyd, Sir Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew
McLoughlin, Patrick
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Needham, Rt Hon Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

**Tellers for the Noes:**
**Mr. Simon Burns and Dr. Liam Fox.**

*Question accordingly negatived.*

## New clause 4

EMERGENCY EXCLUSION ORDERS

'.—(1) Notwithstanding the provisions of section 67(3) of this Act, but subject to section 67(4) thereof, where on the application of a local authority the sheriff is satisfied, in relation to a child, that—

(a) the conditions mentioned in section 67(2) of this Act are met; and

(b) but for this section it would be necessary for an order under section 50 of this Act to be made pending the determination of an application to the sheriff for an exclusion order under section 67,

he may grant an order under this section (to be known as "an emergency exclusion order") excluding from the child's family home any person named in the order (in this part of this Act referred to as the "named person"), for a period not exceeding four days.

(2) Where an emergency exclusion order is made in terms of this section, sections 68 and 69 of this Act shall apply, so far as relevant, to the granting of that order and the local authority shall, if so requested by the named person, assist him to obtain alternative accommodation.

(3) Where an order is made under this section, the Principal Reporter shall forthwith make application to the sheriff for an exclusion order in terms of section 67 of this Act, and, unless previously withdrawn, the application shall be heard by the sheriff within two working days of the lodging of the application.

(4) When an emergency exclusion order is made under the section, such order shall cease to have effect—

(a) on expiry of the time specified by the sheriff in terms of subsection (1) above;

(b) on the refusal by the sheriff to grant an exclusion order, in terms of section 67 of this Act; or

(c) where the Principal Reporter considers that such an order is no longer necessary, having regard to the welfare of the child.'.—*[Mr. Wallace.]*

*Brought up, and read the First time.*

**Mr. Wallace:** I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** With this, it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments:

No. 101, in clause 67, page 52, line 45, after 'order', insert ['other than an interim order'.]

No. 102, in clause 67, page 53, line 34, at end insert [''; and where such an interim order is granted, the local authority shall, if so requested by the named person, assist him to obtain alternative accommodation.'.]

No. 103, in clause 67, page 53, line 34, at end insert—

'(7A) Where—

(a) an application under subsection (7) above has been refused; and

(b) the sheriff considers that the conditions for making a child protection order under section 50 of this Act are satisfied,

he shall make such an order under that section as if the application had been duly made by the local authority under that section rather than this section.'.

No. 104, in clause 67, page 53, line 38, leave out 'subsection' and insert ['subsections (3), (4), (5), (6) and'.]

No. 105, in clause 67, page 53, line 39, leave out 'that subsection' and insert 'subsection (7)'.

**Mr. Wallace:** I am sure that this new clause 4 has far more practical application than any other clause 4—new or otherwise—that may have been the subject of recent discussion.

The new clause and amendments seek to achieve the same objective in different ways—that is, to provide for emergency exclusion orders. The matter was considered fairly thoroughly in Committee, and I shall not detain the House for long. I know that the Government did not embark on the idea of exclusion orders lightly, but it has been welcomed by most—if not all—of the groups that gave evidence to the Committee, either orally or in written memoranda, and by hon. Members on both sides of the House.

It became clear from evidence taken by the Special Standing Committee in both Glasgow and Edinburgh that, if the main purpose of an exclusion order was to prevent children from having to be removed from their homes, it might not always be the right answer, given the time that would be required to give notice that such an order was being sought so that it could be served on an alleged abuser.

**Dr. Godman:** The hon. Gentleman and I have long waged a campaign to put such exclusion orders on the statute book, but would not the new clause complicate matters? Why should the person concerned be excluded "for a period not excluding four days"? What purpose would that serve?

**Mr. Wallace:** I am trying to achieve a balance between a number of rights. The child has a strong right not to be removed from the house, but individuals also have a right to continue to live in their main abode. I have no doubt that every effort was made to achieve that balance in the original drafting of clause 67.

If we go a bit further and ask for an interim exclusion order—an exclusion order granted before notice has been given to the person to be excluded, who will not be given the right to appear before the sheriff when the order is sought—it is important to specify a time limit. I therefore propose that the order should lapse after four days unless a full exclusion order has been sought and granted in that time.

**Dr. Godman:** Can social workers and other interested parties seek to determine within those four days whether the person concerned should be excluded for, say, several weeks, or until the likelihood of a court case materialises?

**Mr. Wallace:** The order is interim in that sense—not pending a decision by social workers on how long it should last, that is, but pending a proper application to the court. In those circumstances, the person to be excluded—or by that stage, if the new clause is accepted, the excluded person—would have had an opportunity to appear before the court if the provisions of clause 67 in its present form had been used in the first place.

I have not used the word "interim", which I believe appears elsewhere. I wanted to avoid confusion, and considered the word "emergency" a more accurate description of the circumstances that the new clause was intended to meet. The four-day period was suggested because, if an order was sought on Friday, an application to the court would be possible on the following Tuesday.

We heard compelling evidence that the current provisions would not, in many cases, allow children to remain at home, and that if we did not establish an emergency procedure they might well have to be taken into care pending the application and granting of exclusion orders. I was impressed, as I think other Committee members were, by the children who told us that their being taken into care could have been avoided. We should try our utmost to avoid that. Although it is important to have regard to the fact that a person has the right not be removed from his or her home, children should also have such a right. They should not be removed unless it cannot be helped. I hope that a proper balance has been achieved by the new clause.

8.30 pm

I recall that the Minister said that he would reconsider the matter and, on that basis, he asked me not to press the amendment. He said that there was a case for emergency exclusion orders if there was perpetual child abuse and that he would consider the matter carefully in view of what had been said by members of the Committee. Again, the reason for tabling the new clause is to give the Government an opportunity to explain what consideration they have given to the matter. The absence of any provision on their part to deal with it suggests that they may have come to the conclusion that it would not be

appropriate to make such emergency provision. The House should be advised as to what sort of considerations have given rise to that decision.

Hon. Members who served on the Standing Committee will remember that I quoted from an opinion of counsel that had been given to a consortium for the Bill. It suggested that the sort of provisions included in the new clause would be acceptable in European law. I remember the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) expressing considerable familiarity with the case involving the Belgian Government, which had given rise to that judgment. That is an important point. It is a good benchmark as to whether we are meeting our international obligations. If the new clause satisfies the European convention on human rights, we shall have gone a long way to striking the right balance.

The amendments in my name relate to the issue in one important respect. They are designed to bring about a result similar to that of the new clause. Amendments Nos. 102 to 105 are on pages 814 to 815 of the amendment paper. Amendment No. 102 says that

"where such an interim order is granted, the local authority shall, if so requested by the named person, assist him to obtain alternative accommodation."

That meets one of the other concerns that was raised with us. If a person is excluded, there should be no question of that person not having proper accommodation. That clarifies the position. Provision is possibly already there in general terms, but the new clause would make it explicit that the local authority, having sought an exclusion order, should then find or help a person to obtain alternative accommodation.

I hope that I shall not stretch the relevance of this too much, but in moving amendment No. 54 in Committee, I made the point that clause 67 contained no provision for circumstances where the child was away from home. In response, the Minister accepted that the amendment was sensible and agreed that he would table a suitable Government amendment to give it effect. I do not see any amendment tonight to give that effect. A reassurance that it will be tabled in another place will be welcome.

**Mr. Connarty:** I am happy to support the proposal that new clause 4 should be adopted by the Government. We would be sadly disappointed if they showed themselves to be lacking in vision, or if they did not have the honest approach to the problem that we thought they were offering the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) when he tabled a similar amendment in Committee. Clearly, the key to this issue is clause 67(2), which gives the conditions of an exclusion order and relates to the new clause. Clause 67(2) states that the conditions are

"(a) that the child has suffered, is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of any conduct, or any threatened or reasonably apprehended conduct of the named person; and

(b) that the making of an exclusion order against the named person

(i) is necessary for the protection of the child; and

(ii) would better safeguard the child's welfare than removing the child from the family home."

We listened to the young people from Who Cares? Scotland, who said that they are excluded from their home when there is an abuser in the home. They asked why they were punished twice and made the victims twice. That was clearly how they saw the position. They are object of the accused abuser. They are then victimised by being removed from their home while the accused abuser remains in the home. The trauma of that exclusion—the fact that they are torn away from the family home—which might last for quite a long time, as under a child protection order, is often the worst part of what happens.

The new clause is excellent, as was the similar amendment in Committee. The proposal is that the emergency order would lie for four days. Under subsection (3), the emergency order would bring the person to court before a sheriff within two working days, which is already in clause 67. Applications would be heard within two days.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the Government intend to table amendments on this subject, but for reasons that I shall give in a moment, we have not been able to do so for tonight, as we intended? I reassure the hon. Gentleman that we have not given up on the issue.

**Mr. Connarty:** That is excellent information. If it had been passed on to the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland he may have made a different and probably much shorter speech. I shall shorten mine by underlining the fact that I am worried that the question turns on whether the sheriff could react to the emergency exclusion order as proposed in subsection (3) within two working days. It is important that four days have been drafted correctly, that the two working days guarantees that the exclusion, particularly of an accused abuser, will not be prolonged any longer than is necessary, and that if the accusation turns out, in the sheriff's eyes, not to be valid, the family would be reunited.

**Dr. Godman:** Amendment No. 102 states, among other things, that the local authority shall assist an excluded person to obtain alternative accommodation. I think that I am right in saying that the Minister talked about assisting such a person to find alternative accommodation. Did he say that thinking of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968? If so was he referring to section 12, which allows a local authority in certain circumstances to provide financial assistance to a person? If a person is to be excluded from the family home, no question exists of him going along to the Benefits Agency to seek assistance. If he is on income support, he would not be able to afford to furnish a place. Presumably, such a person would be assisted in finding lodgings. If so, would that be by way of section 12 of the 1968 Act?

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** May I first deal with the general issue relating to exclusion orders? That was an extremely important part of the Bill. It was one of the major innovations contained within it and one of the main things sought by the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace). It marks an important landmark in the protection of children and it has been widely welcomed.

The detailed arrangements have been the subject of considerable debate and substantial evidence to the Special Standing Committee in Scotland from a wide range of bodies. The new clause and the associated amendments focus on the main issue that confronted us during discussions on provisions for exclusion orders. The issue is whether it should be possible to exclude a suspected abuser from a child's home by virtue of an

*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]*

order or an interim order granted by a sheriff without prior intimation to the person to be excluded or an opportunity being provided for that person to be heard by or represented before the sheriff.

As my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State made clear during the evidence taking, and as I made clear in Committee, we were prepared to listen carefully to the views expressed on the proposals in the Bill. We have done so and it might be helpful to the House, in considering the new clause and the amendments, if I say that the Government are, in principle, ready to amend the Bill to provide for exclusion on that basis.

However, I have to tell the House that the work on that is not yet complete. It has proved more complex than we had expected—in particular, in ensuring that the provisions for such an emergency exclusion provide for a proper recourse, by the excluded person, to the courts for a judicial review. We had to have regard to the requirements of the United Nations convention on human rights and to ensuring the correct entitlement of the person together with the right procedural steps in the courts, so as to ensure proper judicial review. I had hoped to get that done by Report, but it has proved extremely complex.

On the main point of principle—that it should it possible for an interim exclusion order to be granted without intimation, subject to a proper judicial examination—we agree with the intention behind the new clause and the related amendments. However, I am bound to advise the House that, as they stand, they have certain technical problems. I therefore hope that the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland will not press the new clause. We undertake to bring forward amendments in the other place that will provide for an exclusion order to be available in an emergency—amendments that will stand the test of time.

**Mr. Wallace:** The Minister has given a welcome response to the debate. It has given us considerable encouragement and we look forward with interest to the amendments that he will table in the other place. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

*Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.*

**New clause 7**

DUTY TO REPORT SUSPICION OF CHILD ABUSE

'.—(1) It shall be the duty of those staff in establishments who have direct concern for the care, training or education of children, or young people under 16 years of age, to report to the director or superior of the establishment without delay any reasonable suspicion that any such child or young person within the establishment has been abused whether before or subsequent to that child's or young person's admission to the establishment.

(2) It shall be the duty of the director or superior of the establishment referred to in subsection (1) above to make enquiry into the reported suspicions and, if appropriate, to refer the matter to the relevant authority.

(3) In this section, "relevant authority" means the education or social work department, the Principal Reporter or the police force for the area of the local authority district in which the establishment is situated.'.—*[Mr. McFall.]*

*Brought up, and read the First time.*

**Mr. John McFall** (Dumbarton): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

My new clause would make it a duty to report any suspicion of child abuse. It places a duty on staff in establishments that have responsibility for the care, training or education of children or young people under 16 years of age to report to the director or superior in the establishment, without delay, any reasonable suspicion that a child has been abused, whether before or subsequent to that child's admission to the establishment.

Under the new clause, the director or superior would be obliged to investigate the matter and, if appropriate, refer it to the relevant authority, which means the education or social work departments, the principal reporter or the police force in the local authority area in which that establishment is situated.

The new clause arises out of personal experience and I take full responsibility for it. I thank the Minister for his co-operation and courtesy during the past few weeks relating to the information that I sent him and his reply to me. As the hon. Gentleman kindly pointed out, my original amendment would have resulted in rather harsh consequences as there was a criminal aspect to it. For example, he said that "reasonable suspicion" was a matter for individual judgment and that it would not sit easily with a criminal penalty. I had not foreseen that problem, but I have now altered my proposal, so although there is still a duty, it is an obligation rather than something that would attract a criminal penalty.

I consulted a number of people outwith the House on this matter. One was Mrs. Mary Hartnell, the director of social work for Strathclyde. She said:

"While there is whole hearted support for the aim of making all forms of care for children free from abuse, I would suggest that this subject would perhaps be better dealt with in rules and regulations rather than in primary legislation. This could lead to all organisations having to have procedures in place whereby on receipt of allegations of abuse, staff would be required to pass these on to the appropriate manager who would then be bound to consider whether sufficient concerns existed to warrant the involvement of the police. Staff failing to observe these procedures would then be subject to disciplinary action."

That is why I have included the principal reporter and the education and social work departments, as well as the police.

Mrs. Hartnell continued:

"While our current child protection procedures require this course of action, legislation could be formulated to make it compulsory for all organisations offering some form of care to children to be bound by similar procedures."

That highlights a gap in the existing legislation.

8.45 pm

I also consulted Professor Kathleen Marshall, who is doing a study for the Independent Schools Information Service, which covers an area where at present no regulations exist. She gave me good advice, as did Miss Kay Tisdall from Children in Scotland and the Children Consortia. I also contacted various individuals, advocates and Queen's counsel, and in particular, the Centre for Residential Child Care, under Meg Lindsay. That is a partnership between the university of Strathclyde, Langside college, Save the Children Fund and Who Cares? Scotland. The message from all of them is that the intention behind my previous amendment was too prescriptive, but nevertheless something needed to be done because the procedures and guidelines do not work as they should.

In December, I tabled a number of parliamentary questions on the issue. One asked the Secretary of State for Scotland:

"how many a) teachers, b) social workers, c) nurses, d) doctors, e) community education workers and f) other professionals working with children have been found guilty of crimes of indecency or of lewd and libidinous behaviour against persons under 21 years of age in each of the past five years." —[*Official Report*, 20 December 1994; Vol. 251, c. *1059*]

The Minister replied that the information was not available. The fact that that information is not categorised shows a weakness in the statistical gathering for which the Minister is responsible.

There must be a base line. If we are to err—and certainly that is possible—we must do so on the side of child protection. That is what the voluntary organisations and others conveyed to me when I consulted them. That is why they think that debate on the new clause would be useful. They feel that it will throw the spotlight on the whole issue of child abuse.

I accept that the debate is in its embryonic form. Indeed, the CRCC has said that it would like to hold a seminar on the issue, to include all the relevant professionals, so that we can take the debate forward and learn from the experience of other countries—for example, Australia and America, where reporting is mandatory, and Canada. How do the systems work in those countries?

As I said earlier, my interest stems from my personal experience as a school teacher, but also as a Member of Parliament. A number of constituents have contacted me directly because they were sexually abused when they were young people—one, in particular, when in a residential establishment. Those people are now adults, but the legacy of the traumatic experience lives with them 20 years after the incidents. Even today, all these years later, they regularly feel alone, vulnerable and guilty.

**Mrs. Fyfe:** I fully support the intention behind my hon. Friend's new clause. Does he agree that as well as the experiences that he is relating, we have all read the appalling newspaper accounts of incidents when young people and children have been in residential care—the sort of incidents that no one could have imagined before they read those accounts? We must ensure that children are safeguarded when they are in residential establishments. As my hon. Friend says, the debate is still at an early stage, but I am glad that he has tabled his new clause.

**Mr. McFall:** I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. In the past, for one reason or another, a veil has been drawn over the incident; there has been a conspiracy of silence. That cannot be allowed to continue. I have tabled this new clause to push the debate forward.

The problem is widespread, as my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) said, and it affects all areas of society. Indeed, only a few weeks ago I was reading an article written by Mr. Alan Draper, who is chairman of a newly formed team to advise the bishops' conference of Scotland on the handling of allegations of sexual abuse made against Church personnel. He said:

"What has to be faced is that the abuse of children is widespread. It flourishes in a society which is based on competition and power and is undermined by violence towards women and their sexual exploitation. The challenge to transform society becomes enormous when we begin to realise the terrible social cost of the toleration of child sexual abuse. Children are powerless to speak for themselves."

That is very true. Children find themselves in an unequal relationship. Adults have the power and children are powerless. People have to speak for children and the law must be right for them. It is extremely important that we put the proper procedures into place.

Mr. Alan Draper indicates that the abuse of children is not only a Church problem but a social problem. It highlights the fact that our society is not yet mature. Anything smacking of sex is considered distasteful and swept under the carpet. To this House, it should be the shame of the victim that matters. Victims have to go through hoops to be believed and the shame is directed and transmitted towards them rather than the perpetrator. They are placed in circumstances almost the same as those faced by the victims of rape 10, 15 or 20 years ago, when it was never the man's fault; "the woman's skirt was too short"; "too much was being revealed"; and so on. Only through persistent education of society was it realised that it was the man's fault. He did not have to give in to temptation.

The Zero Tolerance campaign, which is well established in Scotland and exists in a substantial number of local authorities, is a good example of the product of such education. With regard to sexual and other abuse, the need for education is paramount. Education of parents is essential. If they have to be told to look for signs of drug abuse, however distasteful that may be, they have to look for signs of abuse in children. The message to children from this debate is:

"Do not accept someone interfering with you. Do not think that you are to blame."

Even after a successful campaign, some people will fall through the net and some children will be victimised, so we need a mechanism to deal with such cases. I suggest that we consider such areas as enhanced compensation—state-funded—but, more importantly, counselling. Counselling on a long-term basis is required. This is a victim's issue and a hidden victim at that.

The Scottish Office has recognised the problem because it commissioned a report, "The Child Sexual Abuser", which was published last December. The report was based on four years' research conducted by teams at Edinburgh and Cardiff universities. It identified four different types of child abuser. Incest abusers proved to be most common; paedophile accounted for 30 per cent. of abusers in the survey; random abusers were considered the most dangerous; and deniers comprised 10 per cent. of the survey.

The chairperson of the team which produced that report, Professor Lorraine Waterhouse, said:

"The Child Sexual Abusers Report makes very depressing reading and many of the discoveries have shocked us"—

despite having worked in that field of research for some time. Professor Waterhouse added:

"The actual sexual behaviour towards the children did involve more aggression than I think we had concluded."

They found that in almost half the cases studied, violence or physical coercion was used. Even among those who claimed not to have used violence, it could not be dismissed. One such man, a paedophile who claimed not to harm his victims, stated for the report:

"I have seen myself putting my hands over the boy's mouth and lift him up, place him in the bushes, put him on the ground, take his clothes off him. That is about it. Nae violence."

*[Mr. McFall]*

The survey also found that more abusers than was previously thought had sexual intercourse with their victims. More than half those convicted of incest had full sex with their victims. Offenders are usually known to their victims as fathers, stepfathers or family friends, and only one abuser in 10 is a stranger to the child. Abusers ranged in age from 10 to 81.

The message from that report is that the abusers are not monsters; they can be nice people whom the victim knows. Society has to be prepared and draw up proper procedures. That is why social workers are calling for a paedophile register. David Colvin, the deputy general secretary of the British Association of Social Workers, said:

"It is astonishing that we have not had information about the people who commit sexual abuse before now. Scotland Yard believe there are more than 4,000 practising paedophiles in Britain and the current method of approaching the problem from the child protection register is absurd; listing the children not the offenders".

About 1,500 children go to hearings each year to complain about abuse and in only 2 to 5 per cent. of cases are adults prosecuted. That is a shocking clear-up rate for a very serious offence.

It is very important that we take on board such comments from professionals and others and do something about them. My new clause is a new idea. It will formalise something which already happens. Local authorities have guidelines and procedures on how individuals should behave, but the new clause will put them on a statutory footing. It will place an obligation—a duty—on staff to report to their superiors any suspicion of abuse: to take action. If they breach that duty, they will not be liable in the criminal courts, but may be liable in the civil courts for damages. Obviously, that will depend on each individual case.

The new clause would impose a similar duty on a director or superior to refer the matter to the relevant authority and "relevant authority" means either the principal reporter, the social work department or the police. The proposal is not cumulative. It is self-standing and applies to whatever agency is appropriate. If the case is clearly criminal, it will go to the police. If it is another form of abuse, it may go to the reporter or be reported to the social work department.

I realise that the new clause is not definitive. Its main purpose is to impose a duty on individuals. It would assist in preventing people from entering into a conspiracy of silence as that creates a climate in which abuse can flourish. I hope that the new clause will aerate the debate as there is an insufficient political wind behind the issue at the moment. I hope that it will help lift the veil of secrecy and pierce the conspiracy of silence and, in the process, contribute to transparency in human relationships.

By accepting or amending my new clause, the Government and the Opposition will assist in promoting in society a more mature, honest and direct approach so that fewer children will suffer the trauma of sexual abuse and those who do suffer that trauma will be dealt with on a compassionate and constructive basis.

**Dr. Godman:** The Minister may well reject new clause 7, with which I have considerable sympathy. He may suggest that the problems highlighted by my hon. Friend the Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) can best be dealt with through regulations or guidelines. However, it seems to me that the employing authorities of the establishments referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Dumbarton have a responsibility. Perhaps the Minister should be focusing his attention on the sanctions that he can impose by way of regulations against employing authorities which have betrayed the interests of the children in their care.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dumbarton referred to all sorts of establishments. I want to raise one or two points in relation to the protection that should and must be given to children who have been taken into care. We sometimes seem to imagine that when a child has been rescued from a violent parent or abuser and has been placed in residential care, that is the end of the line, whereas in some instances it may well be the start of further torment for the child.

9 pm

What guidelines are given to local authorities in relation to those employed in residential homes for young children? There must be a very important role in that regard for the employing authorities to ensure that certain people are not employed and that they become unemployable. There is a major responsibility in that regard on the employers to be very tough gatekeepers and to refuse employment to those about whom they have well founded suspicions in regard to sexual proclivities.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dumbarton referred to the need for the director or superior to make inquiries into such suspicions. Again, I think that that might well apply most appropriately through guidelines issued to employing authorities. I am concerned that children taken into care within the framework of a new small authority may be placed in a residential home in another authority's jurisdiction. How is the local authority which has care of the child able to monitor what goes on in a home outwith its district?

In relation to the new clause, in terms of defending the interests of youngsters against those who are in loco parentis to them, does the Minister envisage that the authority with care will be able to monitor homes to which children have been sent outwith its own area? Will the local authority with care have the right to demand access to the personal files of people employed in those homes? Does the Minister envisage that? It may sound harsh to say that the authority with care in cases of children placed outwith that authority's region should have access to the personal files, but too many people seem to get through the gates and past the selectors and are given responsibility for the care of children when manifestly they are not fit individuals to take on such responsibilities.

When the Minister argues the case against new clause 7, he should say something about the efforts of the Scottish Office, local authorities and other organisations to eliminate from such occupational roles the paedophiles and others who are not fit to come anywhere near children, especially vulnerable children who have already suffered distress and harm. Not enough is done to weed out those people during the selection process. Too often we discover the whereabouts of such people after complaints have been made. Also, is it not a good idea for such residential homes to be restricted to as few children as possible so that, first, their care can be of the

best quality and, secondly, they can be in a family environment, or close to a family environment, rather than an institutional environment?

My hon. Friend the Member for Dumbarton has raised some important questions. I am not sure that his new clause will be accepted today, but such concerns have been raised with all of us, particularly in my case when children have been taken into care. I am sure that the overwhelming majority of residential social workers are very fine people—I have met many of them, and I know that they are fine people—but there is always the odd bod who seems to slip through the selection process and is placed in charge of very vulnerable young children. Somehow or other we must prevent such squalid, seedy characters from obtaining those jobs in the first place.

**Mr. Galbraith:** I support the new clause. It is an important part of the jigsaw that we are trying to put together for the protection of children. I am sure that some people will be unhappy with what we have done in the Bill and will complain that we will not get it right and so on, but the new clause is an important part of the mosaic of the Bill that we are trying to establish. My hon. Friend the Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) said that child abuse is widespread. I am not sure what he meant by "widespread", but one thing is true: child abuse is certainly a problem, and one that we must tackle.

Two problems have hindered our dealing with establishments in the past. One is that, until recently, child abuse was not taken seriously enough. It was considered to be a lesser crime: someone had committed a wee indiscretion and if we all kept it quiet it could be overcome. Secondly, some establishments seek to protect their good name. There is nothing wrong with that; we would all wish to do that. Again, if one thinks that it is a lesser crime, one might not take appropriate action. We cannot allow either of those two problems to prevent proper management dealing with cases of child abuse or to produce what my hon. Friend described as the conspiracy of silence that occurs in all walks of life and in all establishments which seek to look after themselves. The new clause goes some way to dealing with that matter, but I do not know whether it will be perfect.

Are there are any other practical steps to be taken? What rights do non-local authority establishments which look after children—my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) raised the point in a slightly different way—have to examine the employment records of the individuals they employ? Do they have to take the word of the establishment or do they have access to the records of people involved in such establishments?

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** The hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) was a deputy head teacher at Bellarmine secondary school, which has very high standards, and I appreciate the importance of this extremely vital issue.

Child abuse, whatever form it takes, is an obscenity which must be tackled with the utmost vigour. Staff in care establishments and teachers in educational institutions are well placed, as the hon. Gentleman was in the past, to spot indications of abuse, and a considerable number of cases brought to the attention of investigating agencies come from that source. However, it seems somewhat heavy handed to impose a statutory duty on staff to report any reasonable suspicion that a child may have been abused.

In response to the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith), I can say that local authorities already have in place clear arrangements in relation to care establishments and educational establishments for referring suspicions of child abuse to statutory agencies. Those are complemented by child abuse awareness-raising training, and child protection training generally can be used to underpin the procedures adopted by establishments for reporting suspicions of abuse.

**Mr. Galbraith:** Child abuse awareness training is all very well, but we are talking about cases where such awareness training is not needed. These are cases where someone knows that abuse is going on, but still does not report it to the statutory agencies. That is what the new clause is aimed at. It is concerned not with getting people to recognise child abuse, but with getting people to report it.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's point. Following the Orkney inquiry and representations, guidance is being prepared which will be issued to cover that issue. Local authorities can also monitor institutions, and they have the right to have access to the files. It is important for suspicions to be reported, and to be properly investigated if they are found to have substance, but I feel that placing a statutory duty on staff to report such suspicions goes a little too far. There is a general duty to report cases to the reporter. In principle, the hon. Gentleman's point is correct that reporting must take place, but to put a compulsion to do so in statute is a little heavy handed.

**Dr. Godman:** The Minister said that he believes that local authority staff have access to files in such establishments. Does that include access to files concerning employees of such establishments, because that is important? I should hate to have a social work secret police in operation, but it is important that local authorities have knowledge of the people working in the establishments.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** When making appointments of people to work with children, local authorities can consult the Scottish Criminal Records Office for advice on any previous convictions, and that is absolutely right. Local authorities are aware of the need for careful selection of staff, and we regard that as extremely important. There is no question of a witch hunt, but the protection of children should be given a high priority.

With regard to the inspection of residential establishments, I can confirm that section 67(a) of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968—to be replaced by paragraph 29(6) of the Bill—gives powers of inspection in relation to the records of residential establishments. That covers the point raised by the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman).

**Mr. McFall:** I thank the Minister for his constructive reply. Mary Hartnell, a director of social work, wrote to

*[Mr. McFall]*

me recently to say that while child protection procedures in certain areas require such a course of action, legislation could be formulated to make it compulsory for all organisations offering some form of care to children to be bound by similar procedures. That does not happen at the moment.

Only a few months ago, there was a story in the newspapers about allegations of misconduct at the Rudolf Steiner school in Aberdeen. Lothian region had placed some children at that school, but it could do nothing about the allegations because the school was not covered by the measures. I make no comment about what happened in Aberdeen; I merely refer to the principles of the issue.

The Minister said in his response to me dated 20 April:

"the Scottish Council of Independent Schools has commissioned Professor Kathleen Marshall to draft child protection guidelines for independent schools, and this is being done in consultation with HMI and SWSI."

So there are not even guidelines at present. All that I ask is that there should be a general duty. I do not intend to criminalise people, and I took seriously the Minister's comments about not wanting to be too heavy handed. My amendment states that the superior or the director has a duty to investigate, if appropriate: in other words, the doubt—if there is any doubt—would reside with the director or the superior, and it might not be taken further.

9.15 pm

My hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) referred, as did the Minister, to my background in education. In the past, teachers have come to me and said that they had suspicions but that the head teacher did not want to take the issue further because it would reflect on his stewardship of the school or the status of the school in the local community. So investigation can be cut off at a basic level. That should not happen: there should be a duty and obligation to report and it should be written into the law. In no way do we wish to criminalise, but we wish to provide the most adequate protection available for young people. I believe that Parliament could do that by accepting the new clause today.

I ask the Minister to take on board in a constructive manner, as he has done today, the comments that Mary Hartnell has made about the procedures and the need for all organisations to be bound by similar procedures. May we have a commitment today that the Minister will consider some legislation so that when the Bill goes to another place we have some hope that something can be done?

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** All that I can say to the hon. Gentleman is that I will refer what he said to my right hon. Friend the Minister of State. In the case of the Rudolf Steiner school, the inspectorate was put in immediately. That was helpful in clearing the air in that particular case. It performed an invaluable role. I will refer the points that the hon. Gentleman has made to my right hon. Friend the Minister of State.

**Mr. McFall:** I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

*Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.*

## Clause 1

PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES

*Amendment made:* No. 112, in page 2, line 9, leave out

'in any action arising out of any breach of'

and insert

', or to defend, in any proceedings as respects'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

## Clause 2

PARENTAL RIGHTS

*Amendments made:* No. 113, in page 2, line 24, after first 'and' insert 'direct'.

No. 114, in page 2, line 37, leave out

'in any action arising out of an infringement of'

and insert

', or to defend, in any proceedings as respects'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

## Clause 3

PROVISIONS RELATING BOTH TO PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES AND TO PARENTAL RIGHTS

**Dr. Godman:** I beg to move amendment No. 4, in page 3, line 44, at end insert—

'(5A) An arrangement under subsection (5) above as to the exercise of parental responsibilities or parental rights shall be made only with the agreement of any other person who has parental responsibilities or parental rights in relation to the child; and such arrangement may be made—

(a) in the case of a child of twelve years of age or below, only after consulting the child, or

(b) in the case of a child of thirteen years of age or above, only with the agreement of the child.'.

At first glance, it might appear that I am being somewhat heavy handed with this amendment, but I am concerned about the purpose of clause 3(5). Is it advisable to allow a parent to entrust parenting responsibilities to a third person unrelated or even related to the child without the permission of the other parent and without, say, the approval of a court? I believe that the potential for conflict is huge, especially in relation to the rights given to parents under clause 2.

A child aged over 12 years should be able to give his or her consent to any proposed transfer of parental responsibilities. The agreement of a child under 12 years should also be sought in each and every case. If that is not done the child will be treated as a piece of property, which I am sure is not the Minister's objective.

As I have said, the amendment may appear somewhat heavy handed. When looking through it I thought that the Minister might ask whether one should have to apply for a court order before sending bairns off on holiday with their granny. Despite my reservations, there is concern about the purpose of clause 3(5). I believe, and it is the Minister's conviction as well, that where appropriate a child over the age of 12 should be able to consent to any transfer of such awesome responsibilities. Even children under the age of 12 should be consulted at all times. I should be grateful to hear the Minister's response to my somewhat defensive description of the amendment as heavy handed.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** I have some sympathy for the intention of the amendment but it is unnecessary and in some ways impractical. For example,

I am not sure how one would consult a very young infant before asking the grandmother to look after the infant for a couple of hours. More seriously, the amendment is unnecessary because clause 6 already provides for the views of the child to be considered.

It would also be wrong to limit the power of a parent to make arrangements for the care of the child in an emergency when it might not be practical to consult the other parent. It would also conflict with clause 2(2) which gives parents the power to exercise their parental rights independently. However, we hope to cover the consultation of the other parent when a major decision is involved in a Government amendment to clause 6.

**Dr. Godman:** I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

*Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.*

*Amendment made:* No. 115, in page 3, line 47, at end insert—

'; and where any arrangements so made are such that the child is a foster child for the purposes of the Foster Children (Scotland) Act 1984, those arrangements are subject to the provisions of that Act.'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

### Clause 4

ACQUISITION OF PARENTAL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES BY NATURAL FATHER

*Amendment made:* No. 116, in page 4, line 3, after 'mother' insert

', whatever age they may be,'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** I beg to move amendment No. 117, in page 4, line 35, after 'maturity' insert

'and to those of any other person who has parental responsibilities or parental rights in relation to the child (and wishes to express those views)'.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** With this, it will be convenient to discuss Government amendment No. 118.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** I commend the amendments to the House.

**Mrs. Fyfe:** There is a lack of clarity in the drafting of amendment No. 118 because there is some doubt about who is the "his" referred to in line 42 of the Bill. Perhaps the Minister would make a note of that and return to it later.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Amendment No. 117 was tabled in response to the concern of the hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Connarty) to encourage separated or divorced parents to maintain a co-operative relationship towards their children. It would be helpful to insert an amendment about reaching any major decision concerning the fulfilling of parental responsibility or right to have regard to the views of any other person with parental responsibilities.

Amendment No. 118 was felt necessary to provide a reference to such a person as well as the existing reference to a child. As the hon. Lady has requested I shall look at the drafting. However, a person acting as the child's legal representative is not challengeable solely on the ground that the person mentioned in amendment No. 117 was not consulted or that due regard was not given to his or her views before the transaction was entered into. This reflects the provision in relation to consulting the child.

**Mr. Connarty:** I thank the Minister for showing that he listened to some of what I said in Committee, although perhaps some of my hon. Friends did not.

*Amendment agreed to.*

*Amendment made:* No. 118, in page 4, line 41, after 'child' insert

', or a person with parental responsibilities or parental rights in relation to the child,'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

### Clause 9

SAFEGUARDING OF CHILD'S PROPERTY

*Amendment proposed:* No. 119, in page 7, line 11, leave out 'by regulations'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

**Mrs. Fyfe:** I wish to ask a brief question about the intention of leaving out the words, "by regulations". May we conclude that scrutiny of the contents will be reduced if the words, "by regulations" are left out? The Minister should explain that a little further.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** These are small technical amendments, which remove unnecessary references to regulations. Clause 88 states that the Secretary of State's powers

"to make rules or regulations shall be exercisable by statutory instrument which shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament."

The amendments make no material change but offer a useful tidying and simplification of clauses 9 and 26. I am glad to confirm that they are technical and nothing substantial or secretive is being slipped through.

*Amendment agreed to.*

### Clause 11

COURT ORDERS RELATING TO PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES ETC.

*Amendments made:* No. 120, in page 7, line 31, at beginning insert 'In the relevant circumstances'.

No. 121, in page 7, line 39, leave out 'In the relevant circumstances'.

No. 122, in page 7, line 46, after 'person' insert

'(provided he is at least sixteen years of age or is a parent of the child)'.

No. 123, in page 8, line 2, leave out 'with whom a child' and insert

'—

(i) with whom; or

(ii) if with different persons alternately or periodically, with whom during what periods,

a child'.

No. 124, in page 8, line 23, leave out '(2)' and insert '(1)'.

No. 125, in page 8, line 25, leave out 'subsection (1) above' and insert 'that subsection'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** I beg to move amendment No. 126, in page 8, line 26, leave out 'claiming an interest' and insert—

'who—

(i) not having, and never having had, parental responsibilities or parental rights in relation to the child, claims an interest;

(ii) has parental responsibilities or parental rights in relation to the child;

(iii) has had, but for a reason other than is mentioned in subsection (3A) below no longer has, parental responsibilities or parental rights in relation to the child'.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** With this, it will be convenient to discuss Government amendments Nos. 127 and 128.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** In the case of "In re D and Another (Minors)", the House of Lords decided that an order freeing the child for adoption and vesting the parental rights and duties of the mother in an adoption agency had the effect of depriving the mother of being able to apply for custody.

Section 3 of the 1986 Act is being replaced by clause 11(3) of the Bill. It is therefore thought that it would be desirable to give statutory effect to the House of Lords' judgment in relation to orders under clause 11. This was a case where the child had been adopted.

These are altogether sensible amendments and I commend them to the House.

*Amendment agreed to.*

*Amendments made:* No. 127, in page 8, line 29, at end insert—

'(3A) The reasons referred to in subsection (3)(a)(iii) above are that the parental responsibilities or parental rights have been—

(a) extinguished on the making of an adoption order;

(b) transferred to an adoption agency on the making of an order declaring the child free for adoption;

(c) extinguished by virtue of subsection (9) of section 30 of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990 (provision for enactments about adoption to have effect with modifications) on the making of a parental order under subsection (1) of that section; or

(d) transferred to a local authority by a parental responsibilities order.'.

No. 128, in page 8, line 32, at end insert—

'(4A) In subsection (3A) above—

"adoption agency" and "adoption order" have the same meanings as they are given, in section 18 of the Adoption (Scotland) Act 1978, by section 65(1) of that Act; and

"parental responsibilities order" has the meaning given by section 76(1) of this Act.'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

## Clause 14

JURISDICTION AND CHOICE OF LAW IN RELATION TO CERTAIN MATTERS

*Amendments made:* No. 129, in page 10, line 44, after 'made' insert

'(the date of death of the testator being taken to be the date of appointment where an appointment was made by will),'.

No. 130, in page 11, line 1, leave out subsection (4).—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

## Clause 15

INTERPRETATION OF PART I

*Amendments made:* No. 131, in page 11, line 18, after '30,' insert

'someone, of whatever age, who is'.

No. 133, in page 12, line 7, at end insert—

'(6) Where a child has legal capacity to sue, or to defend, in any civil proceedings, he may nevertheless consent to be represented in those proceedings by any person who, had the child lacked that capacity, would have had the responsibility to act as his legal representative.'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

## Clause 16

WELFARE OF CHILD AND CONSIDERATION OF HIS VIEWS

*Amendment proposed:* No. 154, in page 13, line 4, at end insert—

'(5) If, for the purpose of protecting members of the public from serious harm (whether or not physical harm)—

(a) a children's hearing consider it necessary to make a decision under or by virtue of this Part of this Act which (but for this paragraph) would not be consistent with their affording paramountcy to the consideration mentioned in subsection (1) above, they may make that decision; or

(b) a court considers it necessary to make a determination under or by virtue of Chapters 1 to 3 of this Part of this Act which (but for this paragraph ) would not be consistent with its affording such paramountcy, it may make that determination.'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

*Question put,* That the amendment be made.

**Mrs. Fyfe:** Just a brief question—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. This has already been debated. I have just put the Question.

**Mrs. Fyfe:** On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I know that it has been debated but we have not voted on it.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I shall put the question and, if hon. Members wish to vote, they may do so. We cannot debate it further.

*Question put,* That the amendment be made:—

*The House divided:* Ayes 208, Noes 63.

**Division No. 141]** **[9.30 pm**

**AYES**

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(North Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browning, Mrs Angela
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ru'cliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Elletson, Harold

Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Rt Hon Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Grant, Sir A *(SW Cambs)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archibald
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Hughes, Robert G *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Robert B *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lennox-Boyd, Sir Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew
McLoughlin, Patrick
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Marlow, Tony
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Richards, Rod
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sykes, John
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Wolfson, Mark
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

**Tellers for the Ayes:**
**Mr. Timothy Wood and**
**Mr. Timothy Kirkhope.**

**NOES**

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Betts, Clive
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Canavan, Dennis
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Hoyle, Doug
Ilsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Liddell, Mrs Helen
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
Mahon, Alice
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll & Bute)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
Otner, Bill
Pike, Peter L
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Spellar, John
Steinberg, Gerry
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Wallace, James
Welsh, Andrew
Wray, Jimmy

**Tellers for the Noes:**
**Dr. Norman A. Godman and**
**Mr. Michael Conarty.**

*Question accordingly agreed to.*

## Clause 17

DUTY OF LOCAL AUTHORITY TO CHILD LOOKED AFTER BY THEM

*Amendment made:* No. 153, in page 13, line 44, leave out from 'so' to end of line 4 in page 14.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

## Clause 18

LOCAL AUTHORITY PLANS FOR SERVICES FOR CHILDREN

*Amendment proposed:* No. 155, in page 14, line 29, after 'of' insert '—(a)'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

**Mrs. Ewing:** I shall make a brief intervention on the provision of services for children by local authorities. The Minister will be aware that I am deeply concerned about issues pertaining to children with special needs and the assessment of those needs. Does he feel that the amendment will go towards meeting many of the arguments that were propounded in Committee, especially those directed to multi-disciplinary approaches to the assessment of children with special needs? To some extent, the amendments meet some of the concerns that were expressed in Committee. Does the Minister feel that the tabling of amendments in another place would lead to a more effective outcome? This is a matter of great concern to many people.

**Mrs. Fyfe:** As the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) has said, clause 18, as amended, would be fine as far as it goes, but it still contains nothing about expanding the definition of children in need. The clause remains narrow. There is still nothing in it about respite care or

*[Mrs. Fyfe]*

disabilities. The Government have undertaken to do something about carers, but carers are not mentioned in the amendment. If the Minister can assure us that these points will be taken up in another place, we shall not pursue the matter.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** These matters are still being considered. I can assure the hon. Members for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) and for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) that amendments to be considered this evening will ensure that local authority plans for services for children cover all relevant services. I shall look into the point mentioned by the hon. Member for Maryhill, which is under consideration.

*Amendment agreed to.*

*Amendment made:* No. 156, in page 14, line 30, leave out from beginning to end of line 33 and insert '; or

(b) any of the enactments mentioned in section 5(1B)(a) to (o) of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 (enactments in respect of which Secretary of State may issue directions to local authorities as to the exercise of their functions).'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

**Clause 24**

AFTER-CARE

*Amendment proposed:* No. 157, in page 18, line 17, at end insert—

'(2A) Assistance given under subsection (1) or (2) above may include assistance in kind or in cash.'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

**Madam Speaker:** With this, it will be convenient to take Government amendment No. 158.

**Mrs. Fyfe:** We had a substantial debate on this part of the Bill in Committee. We argued that resources should be provided to expand provision until the age of 21 years. That was rejected on the ground that the cost would be far too high. When hon. Members and I asked the Minister what the cost would be his answer was somewhat vague, although an alarmingly large figure was mentioned. Since then I understand that Shelter has given the Scottish Office a range of costs. The Association of Directors of Social Work has also advised the Scottish Office on costs. What has happened to the information given to the Scottish Office since the Committee reported? The child care law review estimated that the cost would be £965,000 per annum. That, the Minister will recall, is far less than the sum that was guesstimated in Committee. The figures provided by the child care law review do not account for the cost of not providing care until the age of 21. If we do not cater for that, further crime will be committed, and the health statistics will worsen.

There are numerous ways in which failing to care for the needs of young people who need care until the age of 21 bumps up the crime statistics. That failure costs the nation and creates health problems, for which there are costs to the health service, and so on. Although it is difficult to estimate such costs, they are real. Opposition Members in Committee felt that the whole proposal was rejected far too readily, without getting the reasonable statistics that could have helped debate. Will the Minister consider it further, given that he has received good advice from helpful and respected organisations in the meantime?

9.45 pm

**Mr. Galbraith:** This was the only subject on which the debate got heated in Committee, partly because Opposition Members consider the extension of provisions to cover an older age to be important. The Minister replied, in what for him was a fairly perfunctory manner, simply by reading his brief without giving consideration to the points that we had made, the main one being that it is all right for those of us with families, to whom we can return, even though we may have left home, but those who have been put out on the street and those in care have no person to whom they can turn.

I understand that there has been some slight movement on the amendment. One of the things for which we asked was that assistance be given in cash. I understand that the amendment now mentions cash. The Minister really must consider once again all the arguments that we made in Committee. My understanding, despite the rather shallow brief that the Minister had, was that he was against it on cost. The costs are now available to him and they are not great. Surely the Government can find their way to providing that small amount of money for those who have been in care and are then thrown out on the streets.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Resources were the major stumbling block to the proposals that were made in Committee. The two amendments result from our lengthy discussions. They improve the provisions in relation to after-care. Amendment No. 157 makes it clear that the assistance that can be given

"may include assistance in kind or in cash."

Amendment No. 158 ensures that, where a relevant young person moves to the area of a new authority, the original authority should notify it of the proposed move only if the young person consents. I will ensure that my right hon. Friend the Minister of State is made aware of the points made by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) in relation to costings. Those representations will be looked at with great care.

*Amendment agreed to.*

*Amendment made:* No. 158, in page 18, line 23, at end insert

'provided that he consents to their doing so'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

**Clause 26**

REVIEW OF CASE OF CHILD LOOKED AFTER BY LOCAL AUTHORITY

*Amendments made:* No. 9, in page 19, line 11, leave out 'by regulations'.

No. 10, in page 19, line 17, leave out subsection (3).—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

**Clause 28**

TRANSFERS BETWEEN DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE UNITED KINGDOM ETC.

*Amendment made:* No. 159, in page 19, line 27, leave out clause 28.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

**Clause 37**

PRIVACY OF PROCEEDINGS AT AND RIGHT TO ATTEND CHILDREN'S HEARING

*Amendment made:* No. 11, in page 27, line 11, leave out 'his' and insert 'the child's'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

**Clause 39**

ATTENDANCE OF CHILD AND RELEVANT PERSON AT CHILDREN'S HEARING

*Amendment made:* No. 12, in page 28, line 12, leave out from 'the' to 'for' in line 13 and insert 'interest of the child'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

**Clause 41**

PRESUMPTION AND DETERMINATION OF AGE

*Amendment made:* No. 160, in page 29, line 18, leave out subsection (1) and insert—

'(1) Where a children's hearing has been arranged in respect of any person, the hearing—

(a) shall, at the commencement of the proceedings, make inquiry as to his age and shall proceed with the hearing only if he declares that he is a child or they so determine; and

(b) may, at any time before the conclusion of the proceedings, accept a declaration by the child, or make a fresh determination, as to his age.'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

**Clause 42**

TRANSFER OF CASE TO ANOTHER CHILDREN'S HEARING

*Amendment made:* No. 13, in page 29, line 30, leave out first 'that' and insert 'which'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

**Clause 44**

APPEAL AGAINST DECISION OF CHILDREN'S HEARING OR SHERIFF

*Amendment made:* No. 161, in page 31, line 42, at end insert—

'(ia) continuing a child protection order under section 52(4) of this Act;'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

**Clause 45**

CHILDREN REQUIRING COMPULSORY MEASURES OF SUPERVISION

*Amendments made:* No. 14, in page 32, line 9, leave out 'rights' and insert 'responsibilities'.

No. 15, in page 32, line 45, leave out 'control' and insert 'supervision'.

No. 16, in page 32, line 45, leave out 'in such accommodation'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

**Mr. Gallie:** I beg to move amendment No. 6, in page 32, line 34, at end insert—

'(ia) has misused alcohol or has in a public place consumed alcohol of a strength greater than 1 per cent. by volume.'.

**Madam Speaker:** With this, it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments: No. 7, in page 32, line 35, leave out 'alcohol or'.

No. 8, in page 32, line 46 at end insert—

'(3)' In this section, "a public place" means any location other than a private dwelling house.'.

**Mr. Gallie:** The amendments are intended to draw attention to alcohol abuse among young people. In Scotland—and, I suspect, further afield—it is currently illegal for shopkeepers, off-licences or anyone else to sell alcohol for consumption by those under 18, and for alcohol to be bought for a youngster. Strangely, it is not illegal for the youngster to consume that alcohol.

The current position puts great pressure on shopkeepers who attempt to establish the age of youngsters, but the *main problem involves* people in the community who see youngsters drinking on beaches or in town centres—it commonly happens on large housing estates—and complain to the police. They know that they must not buy alcohol for young people, and cannot understand why the police are not able to stop those young people drinking in public places. The amendments seek to make it illegal for youngsters to consume alcohol in public places, "alcohol" and "alcoholic beverage" being considered to be any drink that contains more than 1 per cent. alcohol by volume.

The advertising of alcoholic drinks is now being targeted at young people, and there are numerous containers designed to appeal to the young market. That cannot be right.

**Mrs. Helen Liddell** (Monklands, East): I am very interested in this subject, which has been raised repeatedly by my constituents. Although I broadly agree with what the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) has said, I feel some anxiety about the means of redress that he seeks through the children's hearing system and supervisory orders. I think that he should exert pressure on members of his own party, including Ministers, to implement byelaws to outlaw on-street drinking. My local authority, backed by the local police, has made strenuous representations to the Secretary of State for Scotland calling for the implementation of those byelaws, and I feel that that would be a more effective method.

We must also bear in mind the tremendous cost to the health and general well-being of under-age drinkers. These proposals merely scratch the surface; other aspects of the sale of drinks and the drinks industry must be taken into account if we are to encourage a more responsible attitude, and ensure that alcohol is not sold to under-age people.

I agree with the hon. Gentleman about advertising that is specifically aimed at young people. However, other products are available in my constituency and throughout north Lanarkshire, made by people who should know better. There are instances of children as young as nine consuming fortified drinks in my constituency.

I cannot support the hon. Gentleman's proposal for redress, but I think it important to draw to Ministers' attention the deep concern that is felt about this aspect of young people's lives.

**Mr. Bill Walker** (Tayside, North): I support the amendments. That will not surprise my hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie), because in the past I have tried to move similar amendments. At that time, my hon. Friend the Minister gave assurances about local byelaws. He, too, will not be surprised to learn that I have been watching the position carefully; I am concerned, because I think that that may not be the way in which to deal with the problem.

*[Mr. Bill Walker]*

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will say that the Government are aware that there is a problem and that byelaws may not be the most effective answer, because of the problems of having to designate certain places. That has been the difficulty in my constituency and others. I hope that my hon. Friend will tell us that the Government are considering the matter, and may well find a way of dealing with it.

**Mrs. Fyfe:** I hope that the Minister will not support amendment No. 6. I find it incredible that a serious proposal could be made that compulsory measures of supervision should apply in such cases. As my hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mrs. Liddell) said, no doubt exists that under-age drinking, especially in public places, can be a major problem. It causes a great deal of upset and even fear to other citizens going about their business, but this amendment is not the way to tackle it. I hope that the Minister is not minded to say that it is.

**Mr. Ian Davidson** (Glasgow, Govan): May I add my voice to those of hon. Members calling on the Minister to make it clear what action he proposes to take on the serious problem of under-age drinking in public? Substantial discussions on another Bill have taken place in the other place about the problems caused by young people—attacks, thefts and the like. Such problems are often fuelled by alcohol that has been consumed in a public place and that has been made available to and bought for young people by adults, who are often alcoholic. In return for a percentage of the carry-out, they will provide those young people with any amount of drink, provided they have the money to buy it. I hope that the Government will deal with that problem and treat it seriously.

If the Government do not accept the solution of the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie), I hope that they will promise that something will be done about the matter in the near future. Undoubtedly, people in my constituency, and I am sure other constituencies throughout Scotland, want urgent action.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** I have listened carefully to hon. Members' comments, including those of the hon. Member for Monklands, East (Mrs. Liddell) on byelaws as a possible limited way forward. I listened to the concerns of my hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) about drinking by young people.

Two problems exist in relation to the amendments. The first is that they embody a definition of alcoholic drink that does not accord with the definition in any other Scottish legislation. The alcohol strength is set so low that, perversely, some young people might view it as a ban to beat. Secondly, in attempting to cover public places, the proposed definition would venture into such a wide range of situations that it would be difficult to enforce. For those reasons, the amendments are unworkable.

I recognise, however, the great strength of feeling of my hon. Friend the Member for Ayr. I should mention that a considerable array of statutory and common law offences can already be brought to bear, whatever the age of the drinker.

The long-term answer is a positive attitude to health and healthy life styles. The Health Education Board for Scotland works closely with education authorities, health boards and the Scottish Council on Alcohol in getting that message across to young people. We all have a part to play in ensuring that young people are aware of the consequences of alcohol misuse, that they appreciate the legal position and that they are taught the importance of a sensible approach to alcohol use.

I understand my hon. Friend's motives and the sentiments of my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker). My concerns about the problems of under-age drinking and its effect both on drinkers and others are no less than theirs. Having said that, I understand the strength of the views of my hon. Friend the Member for Ayr on the issue. Without commitment, because the problems that I have mentioned are real and genuine ones, I am willing to consider the matter further and to reflect on the debate. On that basis, having made his case, I hope that he will agree to withdraw his amendment.

**Mr. Gallie:** I should like to deal with a couple of points, if that is in order. The first is that byelaws are totally ineffective. Local authorities are reluctant, for example, to act against drinking on the beach. They will not impose byelaws because many families enjoy having a picnic and a glass of wine. Byelaws are not acceptable under those circumstances. My amendment would have been much more appropriate.

Having said that, I recognise that penalties would be inappropriate. I wanted to highlight illegal drinking and to give the police some power to stop that practice on our streets. No difficulty would exist with enforcement. The proposal would be a boon to the police rather than a disadvantage.

However, having heard my hon. Friend say that he will consider the matter and take the principle on board, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

*Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.*

*Amendment made:* No. 162, in page 32, line 46, at end insert—

'(3) In this Part of this Act, 'supervision' in relation to compulsory measures of supervision may include measures taken for the protection, guidance, treatment or control of the child.'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

*It being Ten o'clock, further consideration of the Bill stood adjourned.*

*Ordered,*

That, at this day's sitting, the Children (Scotland) Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Dr. Liam Fox.]*

*As amended (in the Standing Committee), again considered.*

## Clause 46

PROVISION OF INFORMATION TO THE PRINCIPAL REPORTER

*Amendments made:* No. 17, in page 33, line 3, leave out

', having regard to section 45 of this Act,'.

No. 18, in page 33, line 14, leave out

', having regard to section 45,'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

### Clause 47

REFERENCE TO THE PRINICIPAL REPORTER BY COURT

*Amendment made:* No. 19, in page 34, line 2, after 'divorce or' insert 'judicial'.—[*Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.*]

### Clause 48

CHILD ASSESSMENT ORDERS

*Amendments made:* No. 20, in page 35, line 9, leave out 'at that place.' and insert

'in any place to which has been taken or in which he is being kept under a child assessment order.'.

No. 21, in page 35, line 10, leave out subsection (6).

No. 22, in page 35, line 13, after 'section;' insert—

'(aa) the persons to whom notice of an application under this section shall be given;'.

No. 23, in page 35, line 15, leave out 'subsection (6)' and insert 'paragraph (aa)'.—[*Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.*]

### Clause 49

INITIAL INVESTIGATION BY THE PRINCIPAL REPORTER

*Amendments made:* No. 24, in page 35, line 30, leave out from 'Reporter' to end and insert

'thinks, or the local authority think, fit.'.

No. 25, in page 35, line 36, leave out

'he may, if he considers it appropriate'.

No. 26, in page 35, line 38, after '(a)' insert 'he shall'.

No. 27, in page 35, line 41, after '(b)' insert

'he may, if he considers it appropriate'.—[*Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.*]

### Clause 50

CHILD PROTECTION ORDERS

*Amendments made:* No. 28, in page 36, line 18, leave out 'the' and insert 'a'.

No. 29, in page 36, line 31, leave out 'the' and insert 'a'.

No. 30, in page 36, line 46, at end insert 'and'.

No. 36, in page 37, line 12, leave out 'prevent' and insert 'authorise the prevention of'.

No. 31, in page 37, line 15, at end insert

'or class of person specified in the order.'.

No. 32, in page 37, line 16, after 'given' insert

'forthwith by the applicant to the local authority in whose area the child resides (where that authority is not the applicant) and'.

No. 33, in page 37, line 18, leave out 'The Secretary of State' and insert 'Rules'.

No. 34, in page 37, line 22, at end insert 'and'.

No. 35, in page 37, line 24, leave out paragraph (c).

No. 37, in page 37, line 35, leave out subsection (9).—[*Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.*]

### Clause 51

DIRECTIONS IN RELATION TO CONTACT AND EXERCISE OF PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES AND PARENTAL RIGHTS

*Amendments made:* No. 38, in page 37, line 41, leave out 'rights' and insert 'responsibilities'.

No. 39, in page 37, line 42, leave out 'named' and insert 'specified'.

No. 40, in page 38, line 10, after 'order' insert

'under section 50(1) or (2) of this Act'.—[*Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.*]

### Clause 52

INITIAL HEARING OF CASE OF CHILD SUBJECT TO CHILD PROTECTION ORDER

*Amendment made:* No. 41, in page 38, line 35, leave out 'granted' and insert 'made'.—[*Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.*]

### Clause 53

DURATION, RECALL OR VARIATION OF CHILD PROTECTION ORDER

*Amendments made:* No. 42, in page 39, line 25, leave out 'be enforceable' and insert 'have effect'.

No. 163, in page 39, line 30, leave out from 'be' to end of line 35 and insert '—

(a) kept in a place of safety under; or

(b) prevented from being removed from any place by,

a child protection order where the Principal Reporter, having regard to the welfare of the child, considers that, whether as a result of a change in the circumstances of the case or of further information relating to the case having been received by the Principal Reporter, the conditions for the making of a child protection order in respect of the child are no longer satisfied and notifies the person who implemented the order that he so considers.

(3A) The Principal Reporter shall not give notice under subsection (3) above where—

(a) proceedings before a children's hearing arranged under section 52(2) of this Act in relation to the child who is subject to the child protection order have commenced; or

(b) the hearing of an application made under subsection (5) of this section has begun.

(3B) Where the Principal Reporter has given notice under subsection (3) above, he shall also, in such manner as may be prescribed, notify the sheriff who made the order .'.—[*Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.*]

**Mr. Galbraith:** I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 40, line 6, at end insert '; or

(f) any person or class of persons affected by the provisions of section 51(1)(c) above.'.

**Madam Speaker:** With this it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments: No. 2, in clause 57, page 43, line 39, after 'person', insert

'or any person or class of persons who may be affected by the provisions of section 61(5)(b) below.'.

No. 3, in clause 64, page 50, line 15, after 'person', insert

'or any person or class of persons affected by the provisions of section 61(5)(b) above.'.

**Mr. Galbraith:** These amendments have become known as my granny amendments. The Minister is aware of the arguments, so there is no need to reiterate them. I am concerned that a third party suspected of being involved in a child abuse case can have that suspicion laid against him with no provision in the legal process—children's panel, reporter or sheriff court—to entitle that person to any right to be heard or to put his case. The charge can be found against him without his ever having the right to question it. That is an infringement of our civil liberties. Although it is right that the child's interests

*[Mr. Galbraith]*

must be paramount, we cannot allow that to infringe the civil liberty of others. That is the reason behind my granny amendments.

**Mr. Wallace:** On a point of order, Madam Speaker. My amendment No. 98, which is scheduled to be debated further down the list, in fact deals with almost exactly the same point as the amendment moved by the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith). It might help the House if we also dealt with my amendment now.

**Madam Speaker:** That is a commonsense suggestion. Therefore, we shall also discuss amendment No. 98, in clause 59, page 45, line 30, at end insert—

'(3A) Where one of the grounds of referral to which an application relates is a condition referred to in section 45(2)(d) or (e) or (f) or (g)—

(a) the Principal Reporter shall, at the same time as making an application to the sheriff under section 57(6) of this Act, intimate the application to any person named in the grounds of referral, or in respect of whom the Principal Reporter intends to lead evidence before the sheriff, alleging that such person has committed an offence to which the conditions in section 45(2)(d) to (g) relate; and

(b) any person to whom intimation is made in terms of this subsection shall be entitled to be represented at the hearing of the application, and the sheriff may permit representations to be made by the such person, or on his behalf.'.

**Mr. Wallace:** I echo what has been said by the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden. In the Orkney case, there were allegations involving a third party. Even if the matter had gone to proof before the sheriff, that third party would have had no locus to appear. Even if the allegations do not receive publicity, they still very much affect the individual concerned. There should be some ability for that person to be given the opportunity to clear his or her name. Under the proposals in my amendment, if an allegation relates to offences, which by their very nature are sexual offences—relating to conditions referred to in clause 45(2)(d) or (e) or (f) or (g)—and there is a dispute about the grounds of referral and they go to the sheriff for proof, that person should at least have intimation of that dispute and have the right to be represented and, subject to the sheriff's discretion, an opportunity to be heard.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** There are technical reasons why the amendments are flawed. What is more important is the principle, which the hon. Members for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) and for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) have raised in relation to third parties being unfairly accused. Hon. Members may wish to be aware that amendments Nos. 186 and 187 extend an unqualified right of attendance at a children's hearing to any person who has a parental responsibility in respect of the child and to any person who ordinarily has charge of or control over the child. Those amendments will ensure that those persons, having a legal right of contact or actual care, can be heard by the children's hearing and will have subsequent rights.

I shall look at the points that the hon. Members have raised, especially in relation to the amendments, and I shall consider them further.

**Mr. Galbraith:** Amendments Nos. 186 and 187 would not include provision for grandmothers, unless they had parental rights. Is that correct?

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** It would be fair to say that if the parents were unable to look after the child, parental responsibility could transfer to the grandparents. I shall look, however, at the point raised by the hon. Gentleman, especially in relation to the amendment.

**Mr. Galbraith:** It is clear from what the Minister has said that amendments Nos. 186 and 187 do not cover the provisions proposed in my amendment and therefore do not deal with the granny problem. It is not a question of whether parents have lost their ability to look after the child. My amendment deals with cases in which parents still have rights and responsibilities but when a third person—a granny—is involved. Having heard, however, the Minister say that he is willing to look at the subject again and—perhaps—table amendments in another place, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

**Mr. Wallace:** In the case that I cited, the amendments do not apply. We are talking about a third party in circumstances where there would not be any question of the person having parental rights or care and control of the child. The amendments that the Minister mentioned are helpful as far as they go, but they clearly do not cover the kind of circumstances to which the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) and I have referred. Nevertheless, the Minister has indicated a willingness to look at the problem so I do not think that it would be helpful to press my amendment and I beg to ask leave to withdraw it.

**Madam Speaker:** I have to put the Question on amendment No. 1 moved by the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) because the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) spoke afterwards. Therefore if the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland does not wish to proceed with his amendment it will have to be negatived.

*Amendment negatived.*

**Clause 53**

DURATION, RECALL OR VARIATION OF CHILD PROTECTION ORDER

*Amendments made*: No. 43, in page 40, line 17, leave out '(5)(a)' and insert '(5)'.

No. 44, in page 40, line 19, leave out 'the Secretary of State' and insert 'rules'.

No. 45, in page 40, line 32, after 'application' insert

'and, if he wishes to make representations, the Principal Reporter'.—[*Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.*]

**Clause 54**

EMERGENCY PROTECTION OF CHILDREN WHERE CHILD PROTECTION ORDER NOT AVAILABLE

*Amendment made*: No. 46, in page 41, line 6, leave out 'grant' and insert 'making'.—[*Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.*]

*Amendment proposed*: No. 164, in page 41, line 8, leave out 'any such order' and insert

'it is probable that any such order, if made,'.—[*Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.*]

**Mrs. Fyfe:** I would like to ask a question about amendment No. 166. Is training for justices of the peace envisaged and is it intended that an assessor will sit with a JP? The amendment was to be tabled, according to the Government in Committee, because there was supposed to be such a dearth of sheriffs. Yet we have heard since from people who are familiar with the role of sheriffs that there is clearly no need to bring in JPs at all and that sheriffs ought to be available in sufficient numbers to obviate the need for calling on JPs. When I was a councillor, I was also a justice of the peace. I knew nothing at all about such matters. I spent my time as a JP signing people's forms from pawnbrokers because they had lost their pawnbrokers' slips or signing applications for passports. That hardly seemed adequate training to take a decision on an issue like this.

**Mr. Wallace:** I need to crave your indulgence, Madam Speaker, to some extent. I tabled an amendment which, because we are making such fast progress, I was unable to refer to. It related to the use of justices of the peace in areas where they do not sit in district courts. The amendment that I had tabled attempted to deal with that point and I hope that the Minister will explain how he will attempt to deal with it. In an earlier group of amendments, there was reference to justices of the peace not having training to deal with the very sensitive matters which such orders raise.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Training will be provided for justices of the peace as the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) requested. In relation to making justices of the peace available rather than sheriffs where sheriffs are not available, the amendment arose from representations from the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace). In the remoter islands of Scotland, there could be circumstances in which a sheriff might not be readily available in an emergency. The proposal relates not to circumstances in Glasgow or to centres of population, but to the remoter areas of Scotland. It is a safeguard which we think sensible to put in place.

*Amendment agreed to.*

*Amendments made:* No. 165, in page 41, line 1, leave from 'circumstances' to end of line 11 and insert

'for an application for such an order to be made to or for the sheriff to consider such an application'.

No. 166, in page 41, line 12, at end insert—

'(1A) Where on the application of a local authority a justice of the peace is satisfied—

(a) both that the conditions laid down for the making of a child protection order in section 50(2) of this Act are satisfied and that it is probable that any such order, if made, would contain an authorisation in terms of paragraph (b) or (c) of subsection (4) of that section; but

(b) that it is not practicable in the circumstances for an application for such an order to be made to the sheriff or for the sheriff to consider such an application,

he may grant an authorisation under this section.'.

No. 47, in page 41, line 21, leave out

'if not implemented by the applicant,'.

No. 48, in page 41, line 22, leave out 'granted' and insert—

'made, if within that time—

(i) arrangements have not been made to prevent the child's removal from any place specified in the authorisation; or

(ii) he has not been, or is not being, taken to a place of safety'.

No. 49, in page 41, line 23, leave out from 'where' to 'when' in line 25 and insert—

'such arrangements have been made or he has been so taken,'.

No. 167, in page 41, line 33, leave out from 'him' to 'and' in line 34 and insert

'to make an application for such an order to the sheriff or for the sheriff to consider such an application;'.

No. 50, in page 41, line 41, leave out from 'time' to end and insert

'when the child is so removed.'.

No. 51, in page 42, line 1, after 'be' insert '—

(a)'.

No. 52, in page 42, line 1, after 'safety' insert '; or

(b) prevented from being removed from any place,'.

No. 168, in page 42, line 3, after '(1)' insert 'or (1A)'.

No. 53, in page 42, line 6, leave out subsection (8).—[*Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.*]

## Clause 55

REGULATIONS IN RESPECT OF EMERGENCY CHILD PROTECTION MEASURES

*Amendment made:* No. 54, in page 42, line 8, leave out subsection (1).—[*Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.*]

## Clause 56

BUSINESS MEETING PREPARATORY TO CHILDREN'S HEARING

*Amendments made:* No. 55, in page 42, line 24, leave out from 'hearing' to ', the'.

No. 56, in page 42, line 25, leave out first 'the'.

No. 57, in page 42, line 26, leave out 'who will form' and insert 'from which'.

No. 58, in page 42, line 26, after 'hearing' insert 'is to be'.

No. 59, in page 42, line 30, leave out from 'whom' to 'and' in line 31 and insert

'the proceedings are to be commenced'.

No. 60, in page 42, line 39, after 'meeting' insert

', subject to subsection (4) below'.

No. 61, in page 42, line 43, leave out

'subject to subsection (4) below'.—[*Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.*]

## Clause 57

REFERRAL TO, AND PROCEEDINGS AT, CHILDREN'S HEARINGS

*Amendments made:* No. 62, in page 43, line 13, after 'that' insert '—

(a) compulsory measures of supervision are necessary, and

(b)'.

No. 169, in page 43, line 18, leave out ', or' and insert 'and the order is'.

No. 170, in page 43, line 20, leave out from 'place' to 'implemented' in line 21 and insert

'on the eighth working day after that order was'.—[*Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.*]

### Clause 58

WARRANT TO KEEP CHILD WHERE CHILDREN'S HEARING UNABLE TO DISPOSE OF CASE

*Amendments made:* No. 63, in page 44, line 16, leave out from 'hearing' to 'unable' in line 21 and insert '—

(a) arranged to consider a child's case under—

(i) section 57(1); or

(ii) section 64(7),

of this Act; and

(b)'.

No. 64, in page 45, line 8, at end insert—

'(5A) Where a children's hearing grant a warrant under subsection (1) above or continues such a warrant under subsection (4) above, they may order that the place of safety at which the child is to be kept shall not be disclosed to any person or class of persons specified in the order.'.—[*Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.*]

### Clause 59

APPLICATION TO SHERIFF TO ESTABLISH GROUNDS OF REFERRAL

*Amendments made:* No. 171, in page 45, line 31, after the word 'shall' insert

', subject to subsection (4A) below,'.

No. 65, in page 45, line 32, leave out 'of their legal representation' and insert

'of each of them to be legally represented'.

No. 172, in page 45, line 35, at end insert—

'(4A) An application may be heard, in whole or in part, in the absence of the child where the sheriff is satisfied—

(a) in an application in which the ground of referral to be established is a condition mentioned in section 45(2)(d), (e), (f) or (g) of this Act, that the attendance of the child is not necessary for the just hearing of that application; and

(b) in any application, that it would be detrimental to the interests of the child for him to be present at the hearing of the application.'.

No. 173, in page 45, line 36, after 'application' insert

'at which his attendance has not been dispensed with under subsection (4A) above'.—[*Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.*]

### Clause 60

CONTINUATION OR DISPOSAL OF REFERRAL BY CHILDREN'S HEARING

*Amendments made:* No. 66, in page 47, line 4, leave out 'child and his history' and insert 'case'.

No. 67, in page 47, line 40, at end insert—

'(8A) Where a child is to be kept at a place of safety under a warrant granted under this section, the children's hearing may order that such place shall not be disclosed to any person or class of persons specified in the order.'.

No. 68, in page 47, line 41, leave out from 'decide' to 'they' in line 4 and insert

'not to make a supervision requirement under section 61 of this Act'.—[*Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.*]

### Clause 61

DISPOSAL OF REFERRAL BY CHILDREN'S HEARING: SUPERVISION REQUIREMENTS, INCLUDING RESIDENCE IN SECURE ACCOMMODATION

*Amendments made:* No. 69, in page 48, line 21, leave out from first 'the' to 'any' and insert

'contact with the child of'.

No. 70, in page 48, line 21, leave out 'named' and insert 'specified'.

No. 71, in page 48, line 44, leave out 'a history of absconding' and insert 'previously absconded'.—[*Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.*]

### Clause 62

DUTIES OF LOCAL AUTHORITY WITH RESPECT TO SUPERVISION REQUIREMENTS

*Amendments made:* No. 72, in page 49, line 3, leave out subsections (1) and (2) and insert—

'(1) The relevant local authority shall give effect to any supervision requirement made under section 61 of this Act.'.

No. 73, in page 49, line 13, leave out 'in relevant accommodation' and insert—

'(a) in relevant accommodation; or

(b) in any other accommodation not provided by a local authority,'.—[*Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.*]

### Clause 64

DURATION AND REVIEW OF SUPERVISION REQUIREMENT

*Amendments made:* No. 75, in page 50, line 34, after '61(7)' insert 'or section 63(2)'.

No. 174, in page 50, line 46, leave out 'a new condition'.

No. 175, in page 50, line 46, after 'requirement' insert

'any requirement which could have been imposed by them under section 61(3) of this Act'.

No. 76, in page 50, line 48, at end insert—

'(8A) Where a children's hearing vary or impose a requirement or condition under subsection (8) above which requires the child to reside in any specified place or places, they may order that such place or places shall not be disclosed to any person or class of persons specified in the requirement.'.

No. 77, in page 51, line 3, leave out

'(whether with or without variation)'.—[*Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.*]

10.15 pm

**Mr. Wallace:** I beg to move amendment No. 100, in page 51, line 7, at end insert—

'(9A) Where a children's hearing has taken place by virtue of subsection (4)(c) above and a decision has been reached in terms of subsection (7) above, the relevant local authority—

(a) may, within a period of 3 weeks beginning with the date of the decision of the said children's hearing appeal to the sheriff against that decision; and

(b) where such an appeal is made, shall be heard by the sheriff as to the reasons for the appeal.

(9B) Where the relevant local authority appeals under subsection (1) above, subsections (2), (3), (4), and (5) of section 44 of this Act, shall apply to that appeal as they apply to an appeal under that section.'.

The amendment relates to circumstances, which we rehearsed in Committee, when there is an impasse between the children's hearing and the local authority with regard to future arrangements for the child, and specifically when the local authority believes that adoption should be considered and the children's hearing has come to a somewhat different view. At present, children's hearings are not allowed openly to discuss adoption plans, as the purpose of the hearings is more to

deal with short-term issues in the child's life and are not part of the adoption process. That makes it difficult at hearings for permanent plans for the children to be discussed.

When the matter was debated in Committee, the Minister said that he thought that there was some merit in what was being put forward. He said that the amendment that I moved

"would allow the local authority, in any case where it did not receive the agreement of the children's hearing to the proposal submitted . . . to appeal direct to the sheriff. The reason for that seems to have some merit, and we are willing to give it consideration if the hon. Member can provide details of the circumstances in which he thinks it would be appropriate."—[*Official Report, Special Standing Committee*, 7 March 1995; c. 547.]

Regrettably, the detail that I sought to pass on to the Minister came into my hands only at the beginning of last week, and I have not had a proper opportunity to look at it in detail. However, it refers to circumstances relating to, for example, a child of any age who had been subject to a supervision requirement under the 1968 Act, and there had been access by the parents but that had been reduced because the parents had not been keeping up access on a regular basis. At that point, the local authority thought that it might be appropriate to plan for adoption. At a subsequent hearing, the parents reassured the hearing that their life style had changed and access was therefore increased. At that stage there is a possible impasse between the local authority and the children's hearing.

I appreciate that what is suggested is a novel approach. It brings the local authority into a direct relationship with the children's hearing, which is unusual. I can understand that there might be some resistance to that, but, in the interests of the child, there must be some way in which the issues can be looked at by an independent body, in this case by the sheriff.

I hope that the Minister will continue to sympathise with that approach. If he shows that he still has an open mind on the issue, I will certainly furnish him with many more examples of circumstances which could give rise to such a dispute between the local authority and the hearing and when appeal to the sheriff using current procedures, but just adding a bit on to them to deal with such cases, might be an appropriate way of trying to take matters forward at all times in the best interests of the child.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** I am content to consider the matter further and, on that basis, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not press his amendment to a vote.

**Mr. Wallace:** I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

*Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.*

**Clause 67**

DURATION AND REVIEW OF SUPERVISION REQUIREMENT

*Amendment made:* No. 78, in page 53, line 43, after 'child' insert 'ordinarily'.—[*Lord James Douglas-Hamilton*]

**Clause 68**

EFFECT OF, AND ORDERS ETC. ANCILLARY TO, EXCLUSION ORDER

**Dr. Godman:** I beg to move amendment No. 5, in page 54, line 8, after 'permission', insert

'of the other occupiers and'.

The purpose of the amendment is to modify clause 68 (1), but if the Minister gives me one of his honest assurances that it is unnecessary, I shall happily withdraw it. Clause 68(1) states:

"An exclusion order shall, in respect of the home to which it relates, have the effect of suspending the named person's rights of occupancy (if any) and shall prevent him from entering the home, except with the express permission of the local authority which applied for the order."

My amendment would modify that to read,

"with the express permission of other occupiers and the local authority".

I supported clause 67, and I have long campaigned for the exclusion of the alleged abuser rather than the removal of the child or children from the home. But in this case express permission can be given to a named person to enter a home from which he or she has been excluded. Presumably, that requires the permission of the other parent, or the child concerned if he is old enough to have an opinion.

It seems perfectly reasonable to suggest that such a child should be able to express an opinion about the local authority's decision to prevent the excluded person from returning to the family home. The interests of the child should be made an explicit requirement. I must first ask the Minister whether that is feasible.

The amendment would protect the child's interests—and those of the other parent—by putting them on a level with the local authority. I believe that the amendment is necessary, although the Minister may seek to convince me that it is not, to defend the interests of the child. I believe that the child and the other parent should be placed alongside the local authority in this matter.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** I should say at the outset that I have some sympathy with the amendment. The concept of excluding someone from the family home does carry with it the expectation that those remaining will be content with the situation. If those involved conclude that, in the light of changing circumstances, this is not possible—or if the person requires access to remove personal belongings—it would seem reasonable to allow the people remaining in the house to have a say.

There is another side to the coin. It may be that the mother and child who remain in the house are put under serious pressure by the excluded abusing husband, and that they might reach a point where they could no longer resist. It is important to remember that, if the woman had wished, she could have sought to exclude the person through the Matrimonial Homes (Family Protection) Scotland Act 1981. The fact that she chose not to do so, and that an authority became involved, may reflect on the woman's inability or unwillingness to take matters forward herself.

On balance—this was very much a balanced decision—we reached the view that the local authority should probably be left very much in the driving seat. I have little doubt that it would consult where appropriate, but the final decision should be for the authority. The mother, child or other occupants of the family home should not have to face decisions of that type at a time when they might be under considerable stress, and may have difficulty in forming

*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]*

balanced views. They may also have been subject to violence. I hope that, on the basis of that explanation, the hon. Gentleman will agree to withdraw the amendment.

**Dr. Godman:** The child, wife or partner must be consulted comprehensively by the local authority by way of an assessment. I accept the Minister's assurance, and I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

*Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.*

### Clause 69

POWERS OF ARREST ETC. IN RELATION TO EXCLUSION ORDER

*Amendment proposed*: No. 176, in page 55, line 11, after 'may' insert '*ex proprio motu* or'.—[*Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.*]

**Madam Speaker:** With this it will convenient to take Government amendment No. 177.

**Mrs. Fyfe:** I wonder whether the Minister could simply tell us what ex proprio motu means. Could he put that in plain English in the Bill? I recognise that it is Latin. I even did a few years of Latin at secondary school, but the Minister undertook in Committee to try to frame a Bill in language that could be understood not only by Members of Parliament but by the general public trying to find their way through child legislation. I am sure that it can be translated into an easily understood English phrase. I hope that the Minister will let us know tonight what it means and will undertake to do that.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** When I took my law degree exams, I could certainly have given the hon. Lady the exact answer, but she will have to put up with a slightly longer one tonight. The amendment represents a useful addition to clause 69, which deals with powers of arrest in relation to exclusion orders. Amendment No. 176 simply ensures that the sheriff may, at his own hand, attach a power of arrest to an interdict and need not wait for an application by the local authority. I understand that the actual wording means "at his own hand". It is a Latin tag applicable in court proceedings. A sheriff will understand exactly what it means. I am glad that, owing to the excellence of the memories of my officials, who have not forgotten what they learnt in their law exams, I can inform the hon. Lady accordingly.

**Mrs. Fyfe:** I am sorry—

**Madam Speaker:** Order. Is this an intervention? Is the Minister allowing an intervention? If not, the hon. Lady must seek the leave of the House.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** I am content to allow the hon. Lady to intervene.

**Mrs. Fyfe:** I am not sure whether this is an intervention or not.

**Madam Speaker:** Order. It has to be, otherwise it is not in order.

**Mrs. Fyfe:** I thank the Minister for allowing me to intervene. I am sure that the sheriff will understand. My point is that the general public will not. Will the Minister simply amend the Bill to make it clear?

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** I agree with that sentiment.

*Amendment agreed to.*

*Amendments made*: No. 177, in page 55, line 44, leave out from 'of' to 'liberate' in line 46, and insert

'that person further breaching the interdict to which the power of arrest was attached under subsection (1) above,'.

No. 79, in page 56, line 1, leave out from 'person' to end of line 5 and insert—

'(6A) Such a refusal to liberate an arrested person as is mentioned in subsection (6)(b) above, and the detention of that person until his appearance in court by virtue of either subsection (9) below or any provision of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1975, shall not subject that constable to any claim whatsoever.'.—[*Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.*]

### Clause 71

PROCEDURE AND JURISDICTION IN RELATION TO EXCLUSION ORDERS

*Amendments made*: No. 80, in page 58, line 7, after 'or' insert 'of'.

No. 81, in page 58, line 10, at end insert—

'(2A) The Secretary of State may make regulations with respect to the powers, duties and functions of local authorities in relation to exclusion orders.'.

No. 82, in page 58, line 23, leave out from 'situated' to end of line 28.

No. 178, in page 58, line 33, after '(1)' insert 'or (1A)'.—[*Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.*]

### Clause 74

HARBOURING

*Amendments made*: No. 179, in page 60, line 8, leave out second 'and'.

No. 180, in page 60, line 9, after '1989' insert

'and to Article 70(5) and (6) of the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995'.

No. 181, in page 60, line 10, after 'Wales' insert 'and for Northern Ireland'.—[*Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.*]

### Clause 76

PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES ORDER: GENERAL

*Amendments made:* No. 182, in page 61, line 6, leave out from '1976' to '; or' in line 7 and insert

', under section 18 or 49 of the Adoption (Scotland) Act 1978 or under Article 17, 18 or 57 of the Adoption (Northern Ireland) Order 1987 (corresponding provision for Scotland and Northern Ireland).'.

No. 83, in page 61, line 11, leave out from 'child' to end of line 13.

No. 84, in page 61, line 16, leave out 'or'.

No. 85, in page 61, line 18, at end insert

'or of any other person claiming an interest'.—[*Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.*]

### Clause 77

FURTHER PROVISION AS RESPECTS PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES ORDERS

*Amendment made:* No. 86, in page 61, line 48, at end insert

'; and service of such notice shall be effected either by the authority leaving it in the person's hands or by their sending it to him, at his and the child's most recent known address, by recorded delivery service'.—[*Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.*]

**Clause 81**

INTERPRETATION OF PART II

*Amendments made*: No. 183, in page 64, line 10, at end insert—

'(aa) a community home within the meaning of section 53 of the Children Act 1989;'.

No. 184, in page 64, line 27, leave out 'and'.

No. 185, in page 64, line 30, at end insert

'and

(c) in relation to a place in Northern Ireland, means a home provided under Part VIII of the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995, or a voluntary home, or a registered children's home (which have respectively the meanings given by that Order);'.—[*Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.*]

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** I beg to move amendment No. 186, in page 65, line 14, leave out from 'where' to 'rights' in line 15.

**Madam Speaker:** With this it will be convenient to take Government amendment No. 187.

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** I should draw to the attention of the House errors in the printing of amendments Nos. 186 and 187. Amendment No. 186 should read:

"line 15, leave out from 'the' to 'any'."

Amendment No. 187 should read:

"line 19, leave out from 'act' to 'any' and insert 'and (c)'."

The amendments extend the right of participation in a hearing and subsequent proceedings to broadly the same category of persons who at present have such rights under the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968. This meets some concerns expressed in Committee. My statement corrects the incorrect amendments.

*Amendment agreed to.*

*Amendments made*: No. 187, in page 65, line 17, leave out from 'or' to 'above' in line 19 and insert 'and (c)'.

No. 87, in line 21, leave out first 'the'.

No. 188, in page 65, line 21, at end insert—

'(2A) Where, in the course of any proceedings under Chapter 2 or 3 of this Part, a child ceases to be a child within the meaning of subsection (2) above the provisions of those Chapters of this Part and of any statutory instrument made under those provisions, shall continue to apply to him as if he had not so ceased to be a child.'. —[*Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.*]

**Clause 83**

WELFARE OF CHILD PARAMOUNT CONSIDERATION

**Mr. Wallace:** I beg to move amendment No. 108, in page 66, line 37, leave out 'and'.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris):** With this it will be convenient to consider the following: Government amendment No. 189.

Amendment No. 109, in page 66, line 41, at end insert 'and;

(c) shall have regard so far as practicable to the child's religious persuasion, racial origin and cultural and linguistic background.'.

**Mr. Wallace:** Amendment No. 109 would require a court or an adoption agency to have regard, as far as practicable, to a child's religious persuasion, racial origin, cultural or linguistic background. Government amendment No. 189 not only includes that but refers to the child's views, and I am sure it is a much superior amendment. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

*Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.*

*Amendment made:* No. 189, in page 66, line 38, leave out from 'practicable' to end of line 41 and insert—

'—(i) to his views (if he wishes to express them) taking account of his age and maturity; and

(ii) to his religious persuasion, racial origin and cultural and linguistic background.'.—[*Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.*]

**Clause 87**

PANEL FOR CURATORS *ad litem*, REPORTING OFFICERS AND SAFEGUARDERS

*Amendment made:* No. 134, in page 68, line 16, leave out subsection (3).—[*Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.*]

**Clause 88**

INTERPRETATION AND PARLIAMENTARY CONTROL

*Amendment made:* No. 135, in page 68, line 30, at end insert—

'(3) Rules or regulations made under this Act—

(a) may make different provision for different cases or classes of case; and

(b) may exclude certain cases or classes of case.'. —[*Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.*]

**Clause 90**

EXTENT, SHORT TITLE, MINOR AND CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS, REPEALS AND COMMENCEMENT

*Amendments made:* No. 136, in page 69, line 5, at end insert—

'(1A) An order under subsection (1)(b) above may contain such transitional provisions and savings as appear to the Secretary of State to be necessary or expedient in connection with the provisions brought into force.'.

No. 190, in page 69, line 15, at end insert—

'( ) A statutory instrument containing an order under subsection (4) above shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.'.

No. 191, in page 69, line 16, leave out '28' and insert '[*Effect of orders etc. made in different parts of the United Kingdom*]'.

No. 192, in page 69, line 17, after second 'and' insert 'those sections and this section (except section 61(4)) also extend'.

No. 193, in page 69, line 23, leave out 'and 45' and insert ',45 and 46B'.—[*Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.*]

**Schedule 2**

AMENDMENTS OF THE ADOPTION (SCOTLAND) ACT 1978

*Amendments made:* No. 194, in page 71, line 37, at end insert '—(a)'.

No. 195, in page 71, line 38, at end insert '; and

(b) for paragraph (c) substitute—

"(bb) counselling and assistance (but, without prejudice to sections 51 to 51B, not assistance in cash) to children who have been adopted and to persons who have adopted a child; and

(c) counselling for other persons if they have problems relating to adoption.".'.

No. 88, in page 72, line 8, leave out 'approved adoption society's' and insert 'adoption agency's'.

No. 197, in page 77, line 8, after 'payments)' insert—

'—(a) in subsection (1), after the word "section" insert "and of section 51A(3)";

(b)'.

No. 198, in page 77, line 12, at end insert—

'; (c) in subsection (5)—

(i) at the beginning insert "Subject to section 51B,"; and

(ii) at the end add "(including any such payment made by virtue of section 51B)"; and

(d) subsections (6)(a) and (7) to (11) shall cease to have effect.'.

No. 199, in page 77, line 15, at end insert—

'. In section 60(3) (affirmative procedure for certain orders), the words "or 51(9)" shall cease to have effect'.—[*Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.*]

## Schedule 3

MINOR AND CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS

*Amendments made:* No. 137, in page 80, line 4, leave out 'the'.

No. 138, in page 80, line 9, leave out 'the'.

No. 139, in page 80, line 13, leave out 'the'

No. 140, in page 80, line 16, leave out second 'the'.

No. 141, in page 81, line 13, after 'person' insert

'(whether or not he has himself attained the age of sixteen years)'.

No. 142, in page 81, line 28, after 'responsibilities' insert—

'(9B) A person may be a qualified applicant for the purposes of this section whether or not he has attained the age of sixteen years.'.

No. 143, in page 81, line 35, at end insert—

'12A. Where, at any time after the coming into force of the Age of Legal Capacity (Scotland) Act 1991 but before the coming into force of—

(a) sub-paragraph (2) of paragraph 12 of this Schedule, a person's mother or father, who had not at that time attained the age of sixteen years, purported to apply under section 20(3)(a) of that Act to re-register the person's birth, the mother, or as the case may be the father, shall be presumed to have had legal capacity to make the application; or

(b) sub-paragraph (3)(c) of that paragraph, a person who had not at that time attained the age of sixteen years purported to make an application under any provision of section 43 of that Act ("making an application" including for the purposes of this sub-paragraph, without prejudice to the generality of that expression, signing and delivering a certificate in accordance with sub-section (3) of that section) the person shall be presumed to have had legal capacity to make the application.'.

No. 200, in page 82, line 35, at beginning insert

'Without prejudice to section 6B(1) of this Act,'.

No. 89, in page 83, line 35, leave out 'the' in both places where it occurs.

No. 201, in page 85, line 17, at end insert—

'(1A) Section 14 shall cease to have effect.'.

No. 202, in page 85, line 33, at end insert—

'(3A) In section 168 (power of court to refer child to reporter where accused convicted of certain offences: solemn proceedings)—

(a) in paragraph (a), the word "female" shall cease to have effect;

(b) in paragraph (ii), after the word "above" insert "or the person in respect of whom the offence so mentioned was committed"; and

(c) for the words "Part III of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968" substitute "Chapter 3 of Part II of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995".

(3B) In section 171(2) (regard to be had to certain provisions in presumption of age of child: solemn proceedings)—

(a) for the words "application of the provisions of section 30(1) of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968" substitute "the definition of a child for the purposes of Chapters 2 and 3 of Part II of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995"; and

(b) for the words "under Part V of that Act" substitute "by virtue of regulations made under that Act for the purpose of giving effect to orders made in different parts of the United Kingdom".

(3C) In section 177 (directions by court in solemn proceedings as to conveyance of person to residential establishment), the words "provided by a local authority under Part IV of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968" shall cease to have effect".

No. 203, in page 85, line 35, leave out from beginning to end of line 36.

No. 204, in page 85, line 38, leave out from beginning to end of line 39.

No. 205, in page 85, line 44, leave out from beginning to 'for' in line 45 and insert—

'(i) in paragraph (a), for the word "care" substitute "supervision"; and

(ii) in paragraph (b),'.

No. 208, in page 85, line 46, for "section 52(2)" substitute "section 57".

No. 206, in page 86, line 14, at end insert—

'(6A) Section 323 shall cease to have effect.

(6B) In section 364 (power of court to refer child to reporter where accused convicted of certain offences: summary proceedings)—

(a) in paragraph (a) the word "female" shall cease to have effect;

(b) in paragraph (ii), after the word "above" insert "or the person in respect of whom the offence so mentioned was committed"; and

(c) for the words "Part III of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968" substitute "Chapter 3 of Part II of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995".

(6C) In section 368(2) (regard to be had to certain provisions in presumption of age of child: summary proceedings)—

(a) for the words "application of the provisions of section 30(1) of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968" substitute "the definition of a child for the purposes of Chapters 2 and 3 of Part II of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995"; and

(b) for the words "under Part V of that Act" substitute "by virtue of regulations made under that Act for the purpose of giving effect to orders made in different parts of the United Kingdom".

(6D) In section 378 (directions by court in summary proceedings as to conveyance of person to residential establishment), the words "provided by a local authority under Part IV of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968" shall cease to have effect.

(6E) In section 413 (detention of children found guilty in summary proceedings)—

(a) in subsection (1), for the words "residential care" substitute "residential accommodation provided under Part II of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995";

(b) in subsection (3)—

(i) the definitions of "care" and of "the 1968 Act" shall cease to have effect; and

(ii) after the definition of "the appropriate local authority" insert—

"secure accommodation" has the meaning assigned to it in Part II of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995";

(c) after subsection (3) insert the following subsection—

"(3A) Where a child in respect of whom an order is made under this section is detained by the appropriate local authority, that authority shall have the same powers and duties in respect of the child as they would have if he were subject to a supervision requirement.";

(d) in subsection (4), the words "within the meaning of the 1968 Act" shall cease to have effect;

(e) in subsection (5), the words "(within the meaning of the 1968 Act)" shall cease to have effect;

(f) in subsection (6), for the word "care" substitute "accommodation";

(g) in subsection (6A), the words "within the meaning of the 1968 Act" shall cease to have effect;

(h) in subsection (6B)—

(i) for the words "care of" substitute "accommodation provided by"; and

(ii) for the words "their care" substitute "that accommodation or any other such accommodation provided by that authority"; and

(i) in subsection (6C)—

(i) for the word "care" where it first occurs substitute "accommodation provided by the appropriate local authority";

(ii) in paragraph (a), for the word "care" substitute "accommodation";

(iii) in paragraph (b), for the words "residential care" where they first occur substitute "detention in residential accommodation" and for those words where they secondly occur substitute "such detention".

(6F) In section 462 (interpretation) in the definition of—

(a) "child", for the words "by section 30 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968" substitute "for the purposes of Chapters 2 and 3 of Part II of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995";

(b) "children's hearing", for the words "by section 34(1) of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968" substitute "in Part II of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995";

(c) "place of safety", for the words "section 94(1) of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968" substitute "Part II of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995";

(d) "residential establishment", for the words from "has" to the end substitute "means an establishment within the meaning of that expression for the purposes of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 or, as the case may be, of Part II of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995"; and

(e) "supervision requirement", for the words "by section 44(1) of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968" substitute "in Part II of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995".'.

No. 90, in page 86, line 28, leave out from beginning to end of line 41 and insert—

'(b) for subsection (2) substitute—

"(2) In any case where subsection (1) applies, and the child

(a) was being looked after by a council constituted under section 2 of the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Act 1994 before he began to have his home with the applicant, and

(b) continues to be looked after by such a council,

the council by whom the child is being looked after shall not remove him from the applicant's care and possession except—

(i) with the applicant's consent;

(ii) with the leave of the court; or

(iii) in accordance with an order made, or authority or warrant granted, under Chapter 2 or 3 of Part II of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995.".

(c) at the end add—

"(5) In this section "looked after" and "residence order" have the meanings given respectively by section 17(7) and section 11(2)(c) of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995; and "residence order" shall have the same meaning in sections 52 and 53 of this Act.".'.

No. 91, in page 87, line 19, leave out '83,' and insert '84, 99,'.

No. 209, in page 87, line 19, leave out 'and 102' and insert ', 102 and 103'.

No. 210, in page 87, line 20, leave out from beginning to end of line 27.

No. 144, in page 87, line 39, leave out 'the'.

No. 92, in page 87, line 42, leave out second 'the'.

No. 146, in page 88, line 37, leave out 'and'.

No. 147, in page 88, line 43, at end insert 'and

(c) subsection (4) shall cease to have effect.'.

No. 93, in page 89, line 10, at end insert—

*'Foster Children (Scotland) Act 1984 (c.56)*

—(1) The Foster Children (Scotland) Act 1984 shall be amended in accordance with this paragraph.

(2) In section 2 (exceptions to definition of "foster child")—

(a) in subsection (1), for the words "in the care of a local authority or a voluntary organisation" substitute "being looked after by a local authority";

(b) in subsection (3), the words "within the meaning of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968" shall cease to have effect;

(c) in subsection (5), the words "; or (b) while he is a protected child within the meaning of section 32 of the said Act of 1978" shall cease to have effect; and

(d) after subsection (5) add—

"(6) The reference in subsection (1) above to a child being looked after by a local authority shall be construed as if it were a reference to which section 17(7) of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 applies.".

(3) In section 3(4) (saving for Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968), for the words "the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968" substitute "Part II of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995".

(4) In section 7(1) (persons disqualified from keeping foster children)—

(a) in paragraph (b), after the word "1968" insert "or under section 61 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995"; and

(b) after paragraph (d) insert—

"(dd) his parental rights and parental responsibilities (within the meaning of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995) have been transferred, by an order under section 76(1) of that Act, to a local authority;".

(5) In section 12 (removal of foster children on complaint of local authority), for subsection (5) substitute—

"(5) For the purposes of section 21 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 (and for the reason mentioned in subsection (1)(c) of that section) a child removed under this section shall be regarded as requiring accommodation.".

(6) In section 21(1) (interpretation)—

(a) in the definition of "residential establishment", after the word "1968" insert "or of Part II of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995"; and

(b) for the definition of "supervision requirement", substitute—

""supervision requirement" has the meaning given by section 61(1) of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995;".'.

No. 148, in page 90, line 37, after '1995);";' insert—

'(aa) in the definition of "guardian", paragraph (b) shall cease to have effect;'.

No. 149, in page 90, line 43, at beginning insert—

'—(1) The Legal Aid (Scotland) Act 1986 shall be amended in accordance with this paragraph.

(2)'.

No. 150, in page 90, line 43, leave out

'of the Legal Aid (Scotland) Act 1986'.

No. 151, in page 90, line 47, at end insert—

'(3) In section 41 (interpretation), in the definition of "person", the existing words from "does" to the end shall be paragraph (a) and after that paragraph there shall be added—

"; and

(b) in connection with civil legal aid or with providing advice and assistance in connection with any civil matter (but without prejudice to any question of legal capacity arising in connection with criminal legal aid or with providing advice and assistance in connection with any criminal matter) includes a person under the age of sixteen years if he has legal capacity, by virtue of section 2(4A) of the Age of Legal Capacity (Scotland) Act 1991, to instruct a solicitor.".'.

No. 211, in page 92, line 27, leave out sub-paragraph (4).

No. 152, in page 93, line 42, leave out from first 'solicitor' to end of line 43 and insert

', in connection with any civil matter, where that person has a general understanding of what it means to do so; and without prejudice to the generality of this subsection a person twelve years of age or more shall be presumed to be of sufficient age and maturity to have such understanding.

(4B) A person who by virtue of subsection (4A) above has legal capacity to instruct a solicitor shall also have legal capacity to sue, or to defend, in any civil proceedings.

(4C) Subsections (4A) and (4B) above are without prejudice to any question of legal capacity arising in connection with any criminal matter.".'.

No. 212, in page 94, line 12, leave out from beginning to end of line 14 and insert—

'"Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968" substitute "Children (Scotland) Act 1995".'.

No. 213, in page 94, line 15, leave out from 'interpretation)' to end of line 28 and insert '—

(a) in the definition of "contact order"—

(i) after the word "meaning" insert "—

(a) except in relation to an order made in Scotland,"; and

(ii) at the end, add "; and

(b) in relation to an order there made, given by section 11(2)(d) of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995."; and

(b) in the definition of "parental responsibility"—

(i) after the word "responsibility"" insert "—

(a) except in relation to Scotland,"; and

(ii) at the end add "; and

(b) in relation to Scotland, shall be construed as a reference to "parental responsibilities" within the meaning given by section 1(3) of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995;".'.

No. 214, in page 94, line 40, at end insert—

*'Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 (SI 1995/755 (N.I.2))*

46B. In Article 70(7) of the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 (enactments not to apply where child given refuge), in sub-paragraph (c), for the words "section 71 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968" substitute "section 74 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995".'. —*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

**Schedule 4**

REPEALS

*Amendments made:* No. 94, in page 96, line 40, at end insert—

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *'1972 c.24.* | *Social Work (Scotland) Act 1972.* | *The whole Act.'.* |

No. 215, in page 96, line 46, column 3, at beginning insert—

*'Section 14.*
*In section 168(a), the word "female".*
*In section 177, the words "provided by a local authority under Part IV of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968".*
*Section 323.*
*In section 364(a), the word "female".*
*In section 378, the words "provided by a local authority under Part IV of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968".*
*In section 413, in subsection (3), the definitions of "care" and of "the 1968 Act"; in subsection (4), the words "within the meaning of the 1968 Act"; in subsection (5), the words "(within the meaning of the 1968 Act)"; and in subsection (6A), the words "within the meaning of the 1968 Act".'.*

No. 95, in page 96, line 52, column 3, for 'Section 103(3).' substitute 'Section 103.'.

No. 216, in page 96, line 52, column 3, at end insert 'Section 105.'.

No. 217, in page 97, line 29, column 3, leave out from 'section' to end of line 33 and insert

'51, subsections (6)(a) and (7) to (11).'.

No. 218, in page 97, line 33, column 3, at end insert

'In section 60(3), the words "or 51(9)".'.

No. 96, in page 98, line 2, column 3, leave out 'In section 2(5),' and insert—

*'In section 2, in subsection (3), the words "within the meaning of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968"; and in subsection (5),'.*

*—[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That the Bill be now read the Third time.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

10.32 pm

**Mrs. Fyfe:** I shall be brief. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear".] My hon. Friends are pleased to hear that.

In all the confusion of dealing with 43 pages of amendments and new clauses at short notice, it seems that some issues which arose in Committee have not yet been dealt with. In Committee the Government agreed in principle but have not yet activated a number of points that I hope the Minister will note. One in particular on clause 19 was promised on 28 February, and it related to children in

need of services in regard to their religious persuasion. Another issue, which arose in Committee on clause 35, was whether the court or children's hearing should have to specify why a safeguarder should not be appointed.

On clause 44, the question arose of young people or parents appealing on disposal of the children's hearing. In clause 50, the question arose of the police obtaining a wider right of entry with regard to compulsory protection orders. A number of aspects arise under children's rights, and we still have no clarification on the safeguarder's role. Crucially, clause 44(5)(c)(iii) has still not been changed, which means that the sheriff can still make his own disposal when a young person is picked to appeal at a children's hearing.

Little change has been made to exclusion orders. I realise that the Minister undertook tonight to deal with emergency exclusion orders in another place, but he said little about the whole issue of exclusion orders as such. We still need to know his intentions on how an exclusion order would fit in with a compulsory protection order, particularly if an exclusion order were refused, and on powers of arrest.

I could raise a number of other items, but I do not wish to detain the House. Many issues were not brought forward on Report and I trust that the Minister will raise them in another place. They are clearly important issues that were raised in Committee and it is disappointing that tonight's debate was rushed through. Had a little more time been taken, all those matters could have been dealt with, and my hon. Friends who wanted to be off with their families could have had that opportunity.

Despite those criticisms, may I say once again that hon. Friends and I welcome the Bill? As the Minister knows, we sought it for a long time before it came to Floor of the House. We are keen for it to go through and, despite the faults that we have noted, we support it and do not intend to vote against its Third Reading.

10.36 pm

**Mr. Wallace:** I know that one is not meant to refer to what is missing from a Bill on Third Reading, but the Minister will have noted the number of points that are missing, which—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. The hon. Gentleman is quite right.

**Mr. Wallace:** I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I shall therefore not detain the House by referring to those omissions. I am sure that the Minister will want to refer to them in another place.

May I add to what was said by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe)? The Bill commands support on both sides of the House. It is an important piece of legislation to improve the care, protection and welfare of children in Scotland. We hope that it will be improved still further in another place.

Before concluding, it would be appropriate to pay credit to the consortium on the Children (Scotland) Bill and agencies such as British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering, the reporters' association and the Association of Directors of Social Work—

**Dr. Godman:** And others.

**Mr. Wallace:** Indeed. They have all made an important contribution and, through their lobbying and representations, the Bill leaves this place better than when it was introduced. We only hope that it can be improved still further, as it has an important and worthwhile contribution to make to all children in Scotland.

10.38 pm

**Mrs. Ewing:** Those of us who have been involved in this subject are aware that it was a long and hard-fought campaign to introduce legislation on the protection and welfare of children in Scotland. As the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) said, a great deal of credit must go to organisations, both voluntary and statutory, which worked hard in this sphere and have been of great assistance to the House of Commons all-party group for children in Scotland. I thank them very much for their briefings and assistance and even for producing amendments, which were occasionally accepted by the Government as being technically correct. The Government could therefore not reject them.

The Bill is not yet perfect and we must further explore many spheres of the basic principles that have been laid down in the legislative process. One of the sad aspects of the Bill's proceedings is the fact that, when we have divided, either in Committee or in the House this evening, there has tended to be an Opposition versus Government line. I hoped that we would see much more cross-party co-operation. The children of Scotland are not attached to any particular political party. They are our future generations and they will take their own political decisions. The lack of cross-party co-operation has been one of the sad aspects of the Bill.

I am disappointed by the letter that the Minister sent on Thursday on safeguarders, a subject on which we explored a variety of issues. The very short response, which was sent to us at a late stage, did not enable us to explore the matter further on Report and Third Reading.

That said, I hope that many of the other issues will be addressed in another place. I give the Minister the assurance that whatever eventually appears on the statute book, the children of Scotland will be a subject to which many of us will return at every possible opportunity to try to ensure that the legislation is the best possible framework for them.

10.40 pm

**Dr. Godman:** I am please that at long last, I am taking part in the Third Reading debate on a Children (Scotland) Bill. For all of its shortcomings, the Bill will give much greater protection to children, especially those caught up in the terrible circumstances of violence, separation and abuse.

Will the Bill, when it becomes an Act, in tandem with the Prisoners and Criminal Proceedings (Scotland) Act 1993, lead to more installations of television network systems in sheriff courts throughout Scotland? Can the Minister confirm that as a result of these two pieces of legislation and one or two minor interventions by me, the television installation in the Greenock sheriff court will be permanent and not temporary?

10.41 pm

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** I can tell the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) that many

*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]*

matters are still under consideration. The House will have the opportunity to consider them again at a later stage. I shall take a careful note of the hon. Lady's points.

The hon. Members for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) and for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) paid tribute to the consortium and the other organisations. It is only fair to place on record the point that the evidence-taking sittings—the first held by a Scottish Standing Committee—turned out to be a complete success. They were a product of the "taking stock" exercise and of the White Paper, "Scotland in the Union: a partnership for good".

Having made that political point, I shall move on to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman), who mentioned the television network system. I will ensure that I ask the Law Officers about the up-to-date position and I will correspond with the hon. Gentleman in due course.

The Bill is important; it is a major reform of the law in Scotland in relation to children. It is drawn from a whole range of reports produced in recent years and it brings private and public law on children into a coherent framework. It reflects the principles of the United Nations convention on the rights of the child. It is based on the firm view that care of children is essentially for parents, but it recognises that pressures can arise which call for support and, on occasion, intervention by public authorities. Partnership with parents is extremely important.

The Bill provides a sound framework for change and improvement in the interests of children. It sets a challenging agenda of implementation for the future and it provides a framework for protecting Scotland's children. It is good for Scotland's children and what is good for Scotland's children is good for Scotland's future.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.*

## STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c

*Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c),*

LEGAL AID AND ADVICE (SCOTLAND)

That the draft Criminal Legal Aid (Scotland) (Prescribed Proceedings) Amendment Regulations 1995, which were laid before this House on 29th March, be approved.

That the draft Civil Legal Aid (Financial Conditions) (Scotland) Regulations 1995, which were laid before this House on 29th March, be approved.

That the draft Advice and Assistance (Assistance by Way of Representation) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 1995, which were laid before this House on 29th March, be approved.

That the draft Advice and Assistance (Financial Conditions) (Scotland) Regulations 1995, which were laid before this House on 29th March, be approved.—[*Mr. Lang.*]

*Question agreed to.*

## HEALTH

*Ordered,*

That Mr. Robert Key be discharged from the Health Committee and Mr. Richard Spring be added to the Committee.—[*Mr. MacKay.*]

## PETITION

# Crime (Sentencing)

10.43 pm

**Dr. Robert Spink** (Castle Point): I wish to present a petition collected by Mr. and Mrs. Martin, my constituents, and signed by 11,093 people, mainly in my constituency but representing the views of the vast majority of the people of Britain. They think that the House and the courts should get tough on crime and should stiffen sentences, particularly in circumstances such as the following case.

A man was threatening people with a knife, brandishing it at men and women. He then used that same knife to ruthlessly kill a youth. The terms of the petition are:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled, The humble petition of the residents of Canvey Island and the surrounding area, sheweth:

That we, the undersigned, are deeply concerned that the sentence given to Andrew Osborne for the killing of Tony Martin was unduly lenient, and vigorously protest that the sentence should be increased. The jury at Chelmsford Crown Court found 31-year-old Andrew Osborne of Hertfordshire guilty of the manslaughter of Tony Martin during a fight on Canvey Island. Judge Peter Green was reported to tell Osborne that he opened that knife and plunged it into a 17-year-old boy's body. The judge is also reported to state that the sentence which he gave, of six years imprisonment, was the minimum he could pass. There is a great sense of outrage in the community at the apparent lenient sentence, and that the sentence does not provide an adequate deterrent against the carrying of knives and the use of knives, and that this lack of deterrent puts the community at an unacceptable risk.

Wherefore your petitioners pray that your honourable House do urge the right hon. Sir Nicholas Lyell QC MP, Attorney-General, to use his powers to refer the sentence to the Court of Appeal on the basis that it was too lenient.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, etc.

*To lie upon the Table.*

## House Building (Berkshire)

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

10.46 pm

**Sir Gerard Vaughan** (Reading, East): I am glad to have this opportunity to bring before the House a matter that is causing great anxiety and concern, not only in my constituency but in other, neighbouring constituencies. My hon. Friend the Member for Reading, West (Sir A. Durant) has asked me whether, with the Chair's approval, he may join in the debate later. I have no objection at all to that.

Nobody could say that Berkshire has not contributed substantially to housing development in the south-east. In fact, some of us feel that we have taken more than our fair share. It is now proposed that we should have at least another 37,000 houses. Again, perhaps rather uneasily, we would not object to that. What is causing the anxiety, however, is that, on top of that number of houses in the next few years, about 3,000 additional houses are to be placed in the area directly south of Reading and the M4.

This is causing immense concern among the people living in the area, because they believe that it will be very damaging to the environment. I would agree. The problem is that the M4 makes a natural boundary, and we believe that, if it is breached by any substantial housing development, that will open the floodgates to development—not only from the M4 south of Reading down to the Hampshire border, but over that border and right the way along it. What at the moment in that part of Berkshire is an environmental asset will thereby become an environmental disaster.

The problem is that numbers of people are said to want to live in Berkshire. It is certainly a very desirable area. We hope that whatever decision the Secretary of State makes on the structure plan that is before him at the moment will include a caveat to the effect that any further developments in our area should not take place south of the M4. That is a point I wish to put across strongly to the Minister tonight.

It is not just the number of houses that we are worried about; it is where they go. That is what is causing dismay and outrage among our constituents. It would also, in our view, be contrary to the recent announcement by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State that there should not be substantial new housing on green-field sites when there are other development possibilities. I urge that policy strongly on my hon. Friend the Minister.

In this instance, there are many options. All the local authorities have said that they would be able to find other options. Perhaps they would be unable to do so rapidly, but certainly they could find them. We hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will understand that to allow housing development in the area of which I am talking would be contrary to his new policy, with which we entirely agree.

We are told that the houses are necessary because there are many people in Berkshire—living already in Berkshire or born in Berkshire, or educated in Berkshire—who wish to have houses in Berkshire. The same argument was advanced during the development at Lower Earley, which is in Berkshire. It is slightly north of the M4. In the event, the majority of people who moved into Lower Earley, which was then the largest new housing development in western Europe, did not come from Berkshire. They came from other areas, many in the north of the country. To my surprise, many of them came from overseas. They were attracted by the prosperity in Berkshire. It was a place where they could find work.

The new development at Lower Earley did not achieve what was intended. Instead, it attracted other people into the area. We believe that exactly the same would happen if the construction of a mini-town was agreed to the south of the M4.

A few years ago, there was a similar inquiry about an area called Bugs Bottom, which is in the northern part of Caversham. Despite its rather curious name, it was a highly regarded area of amenity north of the river. The result of building there has been a disaster in amenity terms. Much more relevant is the fact that, at that time, I and others were assured that, if we did not object too strongly to development at Bugs Bottom, it would relieve pressure south of the motorway. It has done nothing of the sort. The proposals before my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State make it clear that the pressures remain exactly the same.

Major changes are taking place in Berkshire. Changes are also taking place in the north of Kent, where people desperately want to see more housing. Changes are taking place there as a result of the proposal to make it the area for one of the major channel tunnel rail links. That development will lead to the need for more housing.

Now is not the moment to make long-term proposals for developing the part of the country which I represent in part.

10.53 pm

**Sir Anthony Durant** (Reading, West): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Reading, East (Sir G. Vaughan) for raising the matter of house building south of the M4, and for initiating this Adjournment debate. I am grateful to him also for allowing me to make a contribution to it.

As my hon. Friend has rightly said, development in Berkshire is a big issue. There is widespread concern. Many different figures have been bandied about in discussions about proposed new houses—32,000, 37,000 and as many as 40,000. The Government must realise, as my hon. Friend has said, that there has been over-development in Berkshire. They must also realise that a great part of the county, especially to the west, is green belt, in which there are many areas of outstanding natural beauty.

That means that there are areas that we are not allowed to develop, even if we wished to do so. That means also that development is confined very much to the centre of Berkshire. That is what puts on the pressure.

So desperate has the county been to find various sites that there was a proposal in my constituency to develop an area called the Fobney meadows, which is a flood plain. I have pictures that show it flooded by 2 ft of water. The Holy brook, which was the fresh water supply of Reading abbey, flows through it, and at the height of winter there is flooding. Naturally, that area has to be kept for flood plain. Yet the county, under pressure from central Government and from Serplan, looked to that area for possible development.

I believe, as does my hon. Friend, that the M4 forms a natural barrier. That is where development should stop. We should look for development in north Kent, where there is a great demand. I have the privilege of chairing the committee that is considering the channel tunnel rail link. It is expected that, as part of that new railway line, north Kent

*[Sir Anthony Durant]*

should be an area of development. Surely the pressure should be taken off areas such as Berkshire and moved to north Kent.

10.55 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Sir Paul Beresford):** We have heard tonight from my hon. Friends the Members for Reading, East (Sir G. Vaughan) and for Reading, West (Sir A. Durant)—the two key Members who represent those areas. It is important that we take note of the points that they have made. I shall add to the confusion, but try to clarify it a little, by touching on some of the figures that were mentioned.

The regional planning guidance for the south-east, which has recently been published, made provision for an annual average of 2,667 additional dwellings in Berkshire in the period 1991 to 2006. The guidance makes it clear that that figure has been constrained by consideration of environmental factors. It takes into account the intended long-term shift in the balance of new development pressures and employment opportunities in the region, from the west to the east.

In setting out the housing figure, the guidance makes it clear that it should not be regarded as an inflexible target, but that it should be subject to testing in the process of preparing the structure plan for the county. It was on that basis that Berkshire county council originally accepted Serplan's proposal for 40,000 additional dwellings in Berkshire. That figure then provided the basis for the level of provision in the published guidance.

A replacement Berkshire structure plan was first submitted to the Secretary of State in November 1991. That plan made provision for 41,100 dwellings in the period 1990 to 2006, but was subsequently withdrawn. A second plan was then deposited under new legislation in November 1992. That plan made provision for 35,670 dwellings for the slightly shorter period of 1991 to 2006.

An examination in public was held during June and July 1993. The panel examined various factors relating to housing need and demand and concluded that, in effect, the structure plan's proposed provision of 35,670 could be increased without compromising the environmental and sustainability objectives of the plan. The panel recommended to Berkshire county council that its housing figures should be amended to make provision for "about 48,000" dwellings.

In reaching these conclusions, the examination in public panel made it clear that it had taken into account the county council's case that there were constraints to development in Berkshire. These included various factors, such as the high level of growth in recent years, the need to have regard to sustainable levels of development, the pressure on infrastructure and the strong public opposition in the county to further growth. We have heard some of that this evening.

The panel was sympathetic to those arguments, but concluded that it was possible to accommodate a higher level of housing provision, while still having regard to the environment. It pointed to the need for balance and clarity in the interpretation of a sustainable approach to planning, and looked at the social and economic consequences of a failure to meet the housing need seen in the county.

It should be noted that the panel made no—I repeat, no—specific recommendation to build houses south of the M4 at Reading. Indeed, the plan dated November 1991 proposed 41,100 dwellings, but still did not identify the area south of the M4 at Reading as an area for major new housing.

After considering the panel's recommendations, Berkshire county council published its draft modifications in April 1994, which increased the provision to 37,000 dwellings. Further modifications were published later in the year, but the housing figure remained unchanged. Although an objection was made by the Government Office for the South-east—that the housing figure should be more in line with the regional planning guidance—there was no question that the panel's figure should be imposed, or that development should be directed to any specific location, such as south of the M4.

The location of new development is primarily a matter for the county council and districts. In particular, the decision on whether to make provision for additional development south of the M4 should be made by the local planning authorities in the context of preparing structure and local plans. The plan preparation provides the appropriate opportunity to take into account the environmental issues and the question of sustainability. As hon. Members will appreciate, the issues are complex. The current position is that a "holding" direction has recently been made by the Government Office for the South-east.

Problems of housing provision in the boundary of the green belt merit very careful consideration, and no final decisions have been made in respect of the Berkshire plan. I appreciate that that will cause a slight delay, but the delay is minor when set in the context of the length of time that Berkshire has taken to produce a replacement plan.

I assure my hon. Friends that, although no final decisions have been made, we are convinced that the panel's recommendation for housing provision in Berkshire is too high. Furthermore, I assure my hon. Friend the Member for Reading, East that, in any response to the present Berkshire structure plan, the Government do not propose to identify any specific locations south of the M4 at Reading.

**Sir Gerard Vaughan:** Is there a possibility that the Government will say that development south of the M4 is undesirable, and that future figures should be based on local plans produced by the various district councils? I have a model example before me, produced by Wokingham district council.

**Sir Paul Beresford:** I look forward to seeing my hon. Friend's example, and will give it due consideration.

I think that we have made it as clear as we can that the Government have no intention of specifying any area south of the M4.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Adjourned accordingly at one minute past Eleven o'clock.*

# House of Commons

*Tuesday 2 May 1995*

*The House met at half-past Two o'clock*

## PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

## MESSAGE FROM THE QUEEN

ATTENDANCE

**The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton):** I have to report that Her Majesty, having been waited upon, pursuant to the Order of 25 April, humbly to know Her Majesty's Pleasure when she will be attended by this House, has been pleased to appoint to be attended on Friday 5 May at Twelve noon in Westminster Hall.

## NEW WRIT

For the county constituency of Perth and Kinross, in the room of the hon. Sir Nicholas Hardwick Fairbairn, QC, deceased.—[*Mr. Wood.*]

# Oral Answers to Questions

## DEFENCE

### Departmental Expenditure

1. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much his Department spent in each standard planning region in the last year for which figures are available. [20076]

**The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Roger Freeman):** Data on Ministry of Defence equipment expenditure with companies in each of the standard economic planning regions of the United Kingdom are contained in "UK Defence Statistics 1994", a copy of which is in the Library of the House. We do not compile regional figures for other aspects of defence expenditure.

**Mr. Griffiths:** Is it not about time that the Ministry of Defence did so, because its spending figures highly in any debate on public expenditure in the United Kingdom? From information that is available, it is clear that nations such as Wales are very badly disadvantaged in public expenditure by the Department. Will he undertake a review to ensure that there is a better share of that spending throughout the United Kingdom?

**Mr. Freeman:** The Government believe that that is precisely the wrong way to allocate scarce defence resources. It must be done on the basis of value for money, and that means placing contracts with United Kingdom companies—which win 90 per cent. of all competitions for our procurement—where it represents best value for money for the taxpayer, and not on the basis of some political fix.

**Mr. Devlin:** Would it not be best, from the points of view of value for money and the happiness of the troops and contractors who serve the Ministry of Defence, if more of them were moved out of the south-east of England and up to the north-east of England and Scotland, where the best recruiting areas are?

**Mr. Freeman:** There is a great deal of truth in what my hon. Friend says. He will know—indeed, the whole House will know—that we have moved out of the Ministry of Defence in London, to different locations around the country, the command headquarters for many aspects of service for the armed forces. That is good for employment and for representation around the country.

**Mr. Martlew:** I am sure that the Minister will agree that all areas of the country have suffered because of a reduction in defence expenditure, but does he further agree that the areas that have had Ministry of Defence bases have suffered more than most? Is it not a fact that local authorities in those areas are suffering because the MOD cannot respond quickly enough to ensure that the land is put back into efficient use for the community? Will he confirm that the only criterion being used by the MOD for the sale of land is that it should go to those who pay the highest price? Is that not what happened to RAF Bentwaters, where the base was sold to the Maharishi Foundation because it paid the highest fee, despite the fact that the local authority and community were against it?

**Mr. Freeman:** We believe that faster progress could be made on the disposal of Ministry of Defence land. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and I have given commitments to a number of local authorities that we will move faster and begin the process of disposal and co-operation with the local authority as soon as we know when a change has to be made. I think that local authorities will appreciate that. It is not always the case that the sale is made to the highest bidder. If the hon. Gentleman has anything to suggest that the Bentwaters sale was to the disadvantage of the taxpayer, the House would be interested to learn about it. As a general rule, the highest price should prevail, but not in every circumstance.

**Mr. Salmond:** As a point of fact in answer to the main question, will the Minister confirm that per capita spending on defence procurement in the north of England and in the nations of Scotland and Wales is far lower than expenditure in the south of England? Is the Minister aware that that single aspect of policy has far greater impact than the Government's total remaining regional policy?

**Mr. Freeman:** The job of the Ministry of Defence and of the armed forces is not only to defend the territorial integrity of the United Kingdom but to fulfil our other defence commitments. We must deploy our forces—the Army, the Navy and the Air Force—where that best suits our strategic interests. The Labour party's view on defence procurement is that it would wish to have a defence review within the first six months of any Parliament in which it happened to form a majority. That would be bad for defence expenditure because there would be confusion and, inevitably, the Labour party would reduce defence expenditure.

## Bosnia

2. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the deployment of British forces in Bosnia. [20077]

8. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on British troops in former Yugoslavia. [20083]

**The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind):** We remain concerned at the escalation in the level of fighting and call on all sides to show restraint, to co-operate fully with UNPROFOR and to participate in the search for a lasting political solution. British forces will remain in Bosnia for as long as UNPROFOR can continue to carry out its mandate at an acceptable level of risk.

**Mr. Arnold:** My right hon. and learned Friend will be more than aware of the great pride felt by the House and the country in the humanitarian work of our forces in Bosnia. In light of the deteriorating situation, what does he think will be the point at which their humanitarian contribution will no longer be possible and the requirement for the safety of our service men will be such that we should withdraw them?

**Mr. Rifkind:** The contribution by British and other UNPROFOR forces has been humanitarian, but they have served to prevent an extension of the conflict outside Bosnia and Croatia to Macedonia, Kosovo and other parts of the Balkans which could have even more terrifying consequences. We shall continue to judge the British presence in Bosnia on the basis of whether the forces can carry out the mandate without unacceptable risk to their safety. One can never entirely avoid risk in a war zone, but they must be there on the basis that they are contributors to the United Nations mandate and not taking part in the war.

**Mr. Winnick:** What military action will be taken to ensure that the designated United Nations safe areas in Bosnia are safe from Serbian aggression? Is it not the case that, time and again, Serbian commanders have teased and threatened UN forces in Bosnia because they do not fear any sharp military response? That is basically the reason why Serbian aggression continues in Bosnia.

**Mr. Rifkind:** The proper response must be determined by the UN commanders on the ground, who must take into account both the need to demonstrate to the Serbs or whomsoever may threaten the safe areas the unacceptability of such behaviour and the paramount obligation to ensure the safety of their own forces. Only on the basis of both those criteria being met is it appropriate to contemplate the sort of action at which I think that the hon. Gentleman was hinting.

**Lady Olga Maitland:** Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that we have a responsibility to not only the troops in Bosnia but the aid convoys which are organised by the Crown Agents from Sutton in my constituency? Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that the aid convoy drivers would be determined to continue their vital work regardless of whether they have the escorts?

**Mr. Rifkind:** I pay unqualified tribute to not only the UN forces but the civilians who, without exception, are exceptionally brave individuals, and who have carried out important tasks that have saved many lives. Clearly, it is for them as individuals to decide their continuing presence in Bosnia, but it is part of UNPROFOR's task to give them the protection to which they are entitled.

**Mr. Menzies Campbell:** Does the Secretary of State agree that the question of whether British forces can continue to fulfil their responsibilities without undue risk in former Yugoslavia will be one for the commanders on the ground? Does he further agree that any withdrawal will be so complicated and hazardous that it is inconceivable that UK forces will be withdrawn unilaterally?

**Mr. Rifkind:** The question of the continuing presence of UN forces must ultimately be a matter for the UN Security Council and for national Governments. Important political questions are involved and we cannot avoid the responsibility in that sphere, but the recommendation on any specific military action should be based on the professional advice of UN commanders on the ground. On the final part of the hon. and learned Gentleman's question, I do not envisage any unilateral action by the UK to withdraw from Bosnia. It is important that the UN should act as a single entity with regard to that matter.

**Dr. David Clark:** The House has repeatedly acknowledged the bravery and professionalism of British troops in Bosnia and it acknowledges the increasing dangers as the ceasefire is broken, but does the Secretary of State agree that having confidence in a plan to withdraw troops is the essential prerequisite to having the confidence to keep troops there? Will he assure the House that NATO has a well devised plan to extract troops if that proves necessary?

**Mr. Rifkind:** We have always recognised that it is possible that the UN force might have to be withdrawn, and NATO has already agreed to provide the cover that would be necessary in such a situation. It is an important part of any NATO plan that the Government of the United States of America have said that their forces would be available on the ground, along with other NATO forces, to help supervise such a plan. On that basis, one can say with confidence that there would be single command and control of any such arrangement, which would give the degree of confidence that is necessary to ensure its success, if withdrawal should prove necessary. I repeat that we hope that such a withdrawal would not be necessary, but that it is vital to have such a plan available in case it is required.

**Mr. Bill Walker:** Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that all the evidence is that warring factions seem to be determined to escalate the war, and that, as he has said, our first duty and responsibility is to ensure that the UN force can carry out its assigned task? It was never realistic to expect the UN force to be an invasion force or a force to prevent war. A withdrawal could and probably will be dangerous. It must be properly planned for and managed, which will not be easy. Those who were calling for UN intervention should remember that when we have to withdraw.

**Mr. Rifkind:** My hon. Friend makes a number of valid points. At this moment, the main concern is inevitably with the Croatian offensive against the Krajina Serbs, and with certain reports that we have received that fixed-wing aircraft may have been used by Bosnian Serbs against the

Bihac enclave. It is important that those incidents should cease forthwith if the overall position is not to deteriorate in a dangerous way.

### Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty

3. **Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proposals to put existing British nuclear weapons into disarmament negotiations have been made at the United Nations conference on the non-proliferation treaty in New York. [20078]

**Mr. Rifkind:** The UK has made significant reductions in its nuclear arsenal and maintains only the minimum deterrent required to guarantee our security. A world in which the nuclear forces of the United States of America and Russia were counted in hundreds rather than thousands of strategic nuclear warheads would be one in which we would respond further to the challenge of the global reduction of nuclear arms.

**Mr. Smith:** Can the Minister explain why the Government do not fulfil their obligations under article 6 of the non-proliferation treaty and put all British nuclear weapons, including Trident, into the nuclear disarmament negotiations?

**Mr. Rifkind:** First, that is not a commitment under the non-proliferation treaty and, secondly, it would be a remarkably foolish initiative, which would weaken our essential defence. The hon. Gentleman should be aware that, even if they fulfil all their obligations under the strategic arms reduction talks treaties, in 10 years' time Russia and the United States will each still have more than 3,000 strategic nuclear warheads. Trident will have a maximum of about 300. That is a suitable answer to his question.

**Mr. Brazier:** Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, besides the considerable dangers that he has outlined from the ex-Soviet states, there is also the problem of proliferation in the third world? At least three more states have become nuclear powers in the past 10 years and several other states, including North Korea and a number of the middle eastern countries which form the market for its arms, are close to doing so. Does he further agree that, for Britain to get rid of her remaining minimum nuclear deterrent in the face of potential threats from the third world as well as the possible resuscitation of the Russian threat would be extraordinarily foolish?

**Mr. Rifkind:** Yes, I agree with my hon. Friend. The non-proliferation treaty, which came into force in the early 1970s, has been successful in influencing the level of nuclear weapons possession around the world. There have been relatively few suspected nuclear power states but the world remains a dangerous place. It is impossible to disinvent nuclear weapons technology and that is an important factor to bear in mind as we aspire to a safer world.

**Mr. Fatchett:** Is it not clear that, on this issue, the Government have not normally offered a positive agenda? They have talked in terms of yesterday's agenda and have mostly indulged in personal attacks on Opposition Members. It is encouraging on this occasion to see the Secretary of State taking a more positive approach. Is it not time for him to tell the country why the Government refuse to limit the number of warheads on Trident? Why have they gone to the negotiations on the non-proliferation treaty in New York without a positive agenda and left the running on this issue, as on so many others, to other countries? Again, Britain has not had a voice. The only voice for Britain on this issue is that of the Labour party, which has put forward a positive programme for nuclear disarmament.

**Mr. Rifkind:** I note with relish the hon. Gentleman's sensitivity on the fact that when Labour Front-Bench spokesmen and the Leader of the Opposition are reminded of their Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament past they describe it as a personal attack. I should have thought that they would be proud of their past identity rather than so obviously ashamed of it. The hon. Gentleman accuses the Government of having an agenda from the past. It is significant that the Labour party is pronouncing its belief in "no first use" of nuclear weapons just at the time when the Russians have abandoned such a belief. The Labour party and the People's Republic of China are the only two arguing that philosophy.

**Mr. Duncan Smith:** Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the possession of nuclear weapons is in itself no guarantee of safety unless the Government concerned have the necessary ultimate will to use them should the occasion arise? Does he further agree that it is one thing for a party to say that it now agrees with possession and another for it to say that it would use them?

**Mr. Rifkind:** Indeed, and that is a relevant point. In an interview, the Opposition spokesman on defence was quoted as saying:

> "I am not saying that we will use Trident, I don't think we would. We just need it there as a standing reminder."

I do not think that that will terrify a potential nuclear enemy, but it certainly terrifies me.

### Gulf War Syndrome

4. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what concrete evidence he has had of Gulf war syndrome. [20079]

**Mr. Freeman:** To date, we have found no convincing scientific or medical evidence from our investigations, or elsewhere, to suggest the existence of a Gulf war syndrome. However, despite the lack of evidence, my Department keeps an open mind and these investigations will continue.

**Mr. Dalyell:** From the admittedly circumstantial material that I sent to the Ministry of Defence a fortnight ago, is there any evidence that Gulf war syndrome could at least be related to precautionary medicine?

**Mr. Freeman:** No. I am aware of the work at Duke university and the Department of Defense in the United States, but at both places it is at a very preliminary stage and no conclusions may yet be drawn. It may be helpful to the hon. Gentleman and to the House if I put in the Library—I shall send a copy to the hon. Gentleman—a report recently issued by the US Department of Defense, dated April 1995. It reviews progress to date on clinical evaluation of—from memory—some 15,000 American service men who have been subject to investigation, compared with about 200 in the United Kingdom. The report says that there remains no clinical evidence for a single or unique agent causing a Gulf war syndrome.

**Dr. David Clark:** While veterans of the second world war are very much in our thoughts, should we not also consider veterans of more recent conflicts such as the Gulf war? Why do the Government treat the Gulf war veterans who are suffering from Gulf war syndrome so shabbily? Will the Minister confirm that Colonel Johnson has been withdrawn from the medical examinations of our veterans and that only one doctor is involved in examining the several hundred veterans who claim that they are suffering from that syndrome?

**Mr. Freeman:** I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman should accept, on behalf of the Labour party, the existence of Gulf war syndrome before he has seen the evidence and the facts. The plain fact is that some 500 service men and women from our forces who served in the Gulf have expressed a claim or concern as to their health to the Ministry of Defence. About 200 of them have had a medical examination by a wing commander who is a medical expert and consultant and we have ensured that a report has been put in the *British Medical Journal* to reflect the results of examinations so far. It is still far too early to tell, but there is no clinical or medical evidence to suggest the existence of the syndrome. I shall write to the hon. Gentleman and send him a copy of the *British Medical Journal* article.

## Ex-service Organisations

5. **Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he will next meet representatives of (a) the War Widows Association and (b) the Royal British Legion and other ex-service organisations to discuss the interests of ex-service people and their dependants. [20080]

**Mr. Freeman:** We continue to have a close interest in the views of all associations representing service widows and ex-service men and women in all matters affecting the Ministry of Defence.

**Mr. Mackinlay:** Did the Minister see that, although the chairwoman of the War Widows Association of Great Britain, Mrs. Irene Bloor, last week welcomed the Government's decision to accept the Lords amendments, she expressed grave concern about the younger war and service widows? Is he aware of the continuing anomaly and disparity between local authorities over the disregard in relation to housing benefit and council tax as applied to war widows? Is it not time that, in conjunction with the War Widows Association and other ex-service organisations, the Minister called a conference with a view to presenting a Bill to remedy the anomalies relating to war widows and war pensions, so that the matter may be put to rest in this very important anniversary year?

**Mr. Freeman:** During an excellent debate, the hon. Gentleman spoke at length on a previous occasion about war widows. He will realise, however, that when one deals with an occupational pension scheme—I am referring not to the Department of Social Security's war pension scheme, but to the Ministry of Defence's own armed forces pension scheme—there will always be so-called anomalies. The hon. Gentleman shakes his head, but it is a fundamental tenet of any occupational pension scheme that advances are for those beneficiaries and their successors. On the narrower point about housing benefit, I shall certainly reflect the concern to my fellow Minister and ensure that it is followed up.

**Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** Does my right hon. Friend—[*Interruption.*].

**Madam Speaker:** Old soldiers never fade away. *[Laughter.]* I welcome the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) back to the House.

**Mr. Winterton:** The hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) still has a long way to go.

Does my right hon. Friend accept that, in recent times, the best interests of war widows and ex-service men have been served by Back-Bench Members of Parliament? I refer of course to an amendment on war pensions moved by one of my noble Friends in the other place and to my own and other representations in this place in respect of pre-1973 war widows. Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is about time that a single Minister dealt with such matters on behalf of war widows and ex-service personnel, to enable us to do our job better and to make it easier for those people?

**Mr. Freeman:** For the record, I am pleased to say that war widows receive about £7,000 a year tax free from the Department of Social Security. In addition, some may qualify for the armed forces pension scheme. That is a creditable record in comparison with that of many other countries. As for the narrower question about a single sub-department to deal with veterans, I have never known the hon. Gentleman to be abashed at having to deal with more than one Minister at a time. The plain facts are that a sub-department would be bureaucratic, and that the present system works well. The hon. Gentleman suggests a new organisation, but that would cost money and remove resources from the very people whom we want to help.

**Mr. Jamieson:** At a time when we are celebrating the gallantry and selfless bravery of our armed services, what measures does the Minister intend to take to compensate sailors who were exposed to the known risk of asbestos while serving in His and Her Majesties' ships in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, and who are now dying in pain and poverty?

**Mr. Freeman:** Obviously any illness or death that, regrettably, is due to an incident connected with service will be reflected in the appropriate payments made by the Ministry of Defence. As for the merchant marine, if a condition can be classified as an industrial injury, the appropriate measures—

**Mr. Jamieson:** What about the Royal Navy?

**Mr. Freeman:** I have already said that if a condition is directly connected with service in the Royal Navy, the appropriate measures will apply. I am not aware of individual details, but if the hon. Gentleman writes to me I shall certainly pursue the matter.

## Nuclear Weapons

7. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his estimate of Britain's nuclear weaponry requirements for the next decade. [20082]

**Mr. Rifkind:** In current and foreseeable international circumstances we believe that the United Kingdom will continue to require a minimum nuclear deterrent throughout the next decade. I am confident that the Trident system, within its ceiling of 96 warheads per boat, will provide the necessary force level after the WE177 free-fall bomb is withdrawn from service.

**Mr. Corbyn:** Can the Secretary of State tell us for what possible purpose this country is developing and maintaining nuclear weapons, and against whom they are directed? Does he agree that the holding of nuclear weapons is expensive, immoral and unjustifiable, and that, in the year in which the non-proliferation treaty is up for renegotiation, Britain could look the rest of the world in the eye only if we had a programme of removing all nuclear weapons and bases from this country and taking all nuclear weapons out of service, as our contribution to a peaceful nuclear-free world?

**Mr. Rifkind:** I am interested to hear the hon. Gentleman's views, which I know carefully reflect those that the Leader of the Opposition held 15 years ago. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would like to have a conversation with the Leader of the Opposition to find out to what extent he and his right hon. Friend share those views, and to ask why the occupants of the Opposition Front Bench now seek to dissociate themselves from them.

**Mr. Wilkinson** : Can my right hon. and learned Friend reassure the House by telling us that the sub-strategic version of Trident will come into service as soon as the free-fall WE177 is phased out in the Royal Air Force? The French maintain a proper graduated deterrence, with air-launched systems. If we cannot do that, can we at least make sure that there is no hiatus, or deterrent gap, in the British armed forces?

**Mr. Rifkind:** We have concluded that it is desirable to maintain a sub-strategic capability, which can be achieved through Trident at virtually no additional cost. That makes it an infinitely less expensive way of meeting the need than developing a new air-launched capability. I can assure my hon. Friend that there will be no gap in the existence of the capability.

### Former Yugoslavia

9. **Mr. Gapes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what further plans he has to reduce or withdraw the British military presence in former Yugoslavia. [20084]

**Mr. Rifkind:** We intend to maintain a major contribution to UNPROFOR in Bosnia so long as our forces can continue to carry out the UN mandate at an acceptable level of risk. The size of our contribution is kept under close review.

**Mr. Gapes:** Will the Secretary of State go beyond simply urging restraint on the parties in the conflict, and condemn the Croatian Government for the attack on the Serb-populated Krajina area? Will he also condemn the Serbs for taking UN Nepalese forces hostage? Will he make it clear that as soon as the military commanders on the ground recommend it, we will make immediate preparations for a withdrawal to stop loss of life among our troops?

**Mr. Rifkind:** The Security Council has made clear its condemnation of the Croatian action, which appears to go beyond the immediate objective of controlling a road and may threaten the position of the whole enclave. Any question of a total withdrawal of UNPROFOR from Bosnia would not just be a matter on which the UN commanders express a view—important though that would be—and would clearly have far wider implications which would have to be addressed by the Security Council.

**Sir Jim Spicer:** I do not suppose that my right hon. and learned Friend had time yesterday to listen to the Jimmy Young show. Had he done so, he would have heard the leader of the Liberal Democrats, the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), assert that when he last went to Bosnia, he was determined that British forces would withdraw unilaterally but—thank goodness—he was overruled by the military commanders on the ground. In the light of my right hon. and learned Friend's answer to an earlier question, will he deny that that is possible?

**Mr. Rifkind:** The leader of the Liberal Democrats may wish to explain to the House his regular contortions of policy. I can only express our satisfaction that, on this occasion, he accepted the advice of the UN commanders whom he met.

**Dr. Reid:** The Secretary of State will know that the Opposition supported the Government's decision to send British troops into Bosnia for the limited and specific purpose of humanitarian aid and with clear rules of engagement which provided no undue risk to our troops. Can I assure the right hon. and learned Gentleman that—in keeping the position under review, both with our commanders on the spot and with our allies—were the Government to decide that the tasks for which the troops had been sent out could no longer be accomplished or that the risk to their lives had become an undue risk, the Opposition would not treat that in any partisan or narrow fashion?

**Mr. Rifkind:** I accept the spirit in which the hon. Gentleman asks his question. When British troops are carrying out a difficult task in any part of the world, anything that is required for their safety and their safe return to this country should have the support of the whole House.

**Mr. Garnier:** My right hon. and learned Friend will know that elements of the Royal Anglian regiment have recently served in former Yugoslavia. Following the presentation of new colours to the Royal Anglian regiment last Saturday by Her Royal Highness Princess Margaret, can my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that the Government will continue to maintain the front-line capability of that proud and ancient regiment?

**Mr. Rifkind:** I can say to my hon. and learned Friend that we acknowledge the splendid contribution which that fine regiment makes to the UN and to Her Majesty's forces.

### Sea Dumping

10. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had concerning the potential dangers of ordnance, chemicals and other materials dumped in the sea between south-west Scotland and Northern Ireland. [20085]

**Mr. Freeman:** The licensing procedure for the dump site between south-west Scotland and Northern Ireland involved the Department of Transport, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Scottish Office. My Department keeps closely in touch with other Government Departments on these issues.

**Mr. Foulkes:** Will the Minister confirm the information obtained by my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) that the MOD has dumped 1 million tonnes of munitions, plus bombs and chemical weapons—including arsenic and nerve gas—in sites at sea including the Clyde and the North channel? Will he announce a monitoring scheme to ensure the safety of fishing boats, submarines and those of us who live around the coast in that area from harm from those highly dangerous substances?

**Mr. Freeman:** The hon. Gentleman is right about the North channel. After the war, in 1945 and 1946, rockets with phosgene were dumped in the channel, as has been publicly disclosed for many years. As part of their routine monitoring of coastal waters, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Scottish Office marine laboratory will be conducting standard water sampling tests in the North channel.

**Rev. Martin Smyth:** Has the Northern Ireland Office been consulted on that issue, bearing in mind the plans for gas pipe connections and electric connectors, and the movement of the sea bed?

**Mr. Freeman:** I shall ensure that the Northern Ireland Office is consulted.

### Hydrographic Office

11. **Mr. Luff:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement of his policy on the Hydrographic Office. [20086]

**Mr. Freeman:** The Government attach great importance to a specialist hydrographic capability to provide effective support to Royal Navy operations.

**Mr. Luff:** My right hon. Friend will understand that it is not simply because my brother-in-law is an officer in the hydrographic service that I attach such importance to its role in protecting this country's vital national interests. What reassurance can my right hon Friend give me that the service will have adequate ships to enable it to continue to defend those vital national interests into its third century?

**Mr. Freeman:** I am delighted to tell my hon. Friend that we have ordered a new ocean survey vessel, which is to be named HMS Scott, after Scott of the Antarctic. The ship will fly the white ensign, have a royal naval crew and be of great help to the hydrographic service.

### Deaths (Active Duty)

12. **Sir Michael Neubert:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many members of Her Majesty's armed forces died on active service during 1994. [20087]

**Mr. Freeman:** Nine members of Her Majesty's armed forces died last year as a result of hostile and enemy action. A further four service men died following road traffic accidents while serving with United Nations forces in Bosnia.

**Sir Michael Neubert:** Is not it instructive to contrast those figures with the number of women who qualified as war widows during the calendar year 1994—more than 1,600—and to recognise, at this time when we are celebrating and commemorating the 50th anniversary of victory in Europe, that so-called war widows are not solely by any means the widows of men killed in action during the second world war?

**Mr. Freeman:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend. It is useful to remember that 48,500 war widows have recently benefited from the decision to ensure that their war widows pension is restored on the death or loss of a second husband, that the numbers are being added to at the rate of 1,600 per annum and that the death of husbands who have died recently can be traced back to service in the British armed forces. About 66,000 widows receive benefit from the armed forces parliamentary pension scheme since the loss of their husbands was due to natural causes, not to service.

### Trident

13. **Dr. Spink:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of whether the current ceiling of warheads per Trident submarine meets the United Kingdom's minimum deterrent needs. [20088]

**Mr. Rifkind:** The Government have said that each Trident boat will carry not more than 96 warheads. What we actually deploy at any particular time, to provide a minimum deterrent and to ensure the same quality of deterrence as we required from Polaris, may be considerably less and will depend on our current assessment of a range of factors.

**Dr. Spink:** I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for that answer. Will he do some lateral thinking and tell us the implications if Britain announced that it would deploy no more warheads on Trident than it deploys on Polaris, as the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) advocated in the *New Statesman* this month?

**Mr. Rifkind:** The option to which my hon. Friend refers, which is the official view of the Labour party I understand, suggests a simplistic misunderstanding, based on an inability to compare Polaris with Trident. The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) and his colleagues appear to be unaware that they have not taken into account the sub-strategic role of Trident. They seem to be unaware of the lower yield of each Trident warhead compared with that of Polaris, and of the need to take into account the military capabilities and defensive systems of a potential nuclear adversary. That is why their policy is unsound and should not be supported.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** Does the Secretary of State welcome the statement by British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. that it no longer manufactures or processes any fissile material for use in nuclear weapons on any of its sites in the United Kingdom?

**Mr. Rifkind:** As the hon. Gentleman will be aware, the United Kingdom Government themselves have

announced a cessation of the production of fissile material for explosives purposes. That shows our commitment to a cut-off convention.

### United States Air Force

14. **Mr. Spring:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his assessment of the role of the United States Air Force in Britain; and if he will make a statement. [20089]

**Mr. Freeman:** The USAF presence in the United Kingdom forms an important part of the United States' continuing commitment to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and the security of Europe. Her Majesty's Government welcome the contribution that those forces also provide to United Nations peacekeeping and humanitarian aid operations.

**Mr. Spring:** Is my right hon. Friend aware that the two USAF bases in my constituency, RAF Mildenhall and RAF Lakenheath, are expanding in numbers and importance at this time? Will my right hon. Friend join me, at this historic time, in saluting the USAF presence in this country, which helped to see off the forces of tyranny 50 years ago and helped to preserve democracy in Europe during the long and bitter years of the cold war?

**Mr. Freeman:** It is fitting, as we approach victory in Europe day, to pay tribute to the United States Air Force, based largely in this country—the Third Air Force today—which helped win freedom and victory for the allies.

## PRIME MINISTER

### Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 2 May. [20106]

**The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major):** This morning, I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

**Mr. Flynn:** Does not the letter from my constituent, Mr. W. D. Knight, express the opinions of millions of people in this country when he says that he will never again buy a national lottery ticket? How, he asks, can the nation—*[Interruption.]*—gain £14 million of value by buying papers without copyright, many of which papers we already own? Will the Prime Minister guarantee today that, in future, in that instance and all others, national lottery moneys will go to genuine good causes of health, education and crime prevention, not to the rich and the greedy?

**The Prime Minister:** I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman's constituent feels like that, because the proceeds of lottery money do go to very good causes, and I think that the hon. Gentleman knows that. He is, of course, wrong in the assertion that the lottery money was used to purchase papers already owned by the state. That is not the case. What were purchased were the non-state papers, as I told the House last week.

**Mr. Thomason:** Does my right hon. Friend, in determining Government policy, sometimes receive advice from advisers who one year suggest one thing and another year suggest something else? If they do that, does he take much notice of them, and does he consider that that is what the Labour party is doing?

**The Prime Minister:** Yes, it is. I can confirm to my hon. Friend that we receive advice from many sources, some of which I take, much of which I do not. When advisers behave as my hon. Friend proposes, I tend to give less credence to their advice.

**Mr. Blair:** On the Government's policy, revealed this morning, to tax the mortgage insurance payments of sick and unemployed people, will the Prime Minister confirm that, at 10 o'clock this morning, the chairman of the Tory party said that there was no such policy; at 11 o'clock this morning, Downing street said that there was a policy but they were reviewing it; at 12.3 pm, the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) described the policy as lunacy; and at 12.42 pm the Chancellor issued a statement, saying that he had now completed the review and was ditching the policy? *[Interruption.]* Does not that show the utterly chaotic shambles that is his Government?

**The Prime Minister:** I must say that that is extremely amusing and I can see that the right hon. Gentleman enjoyed it, as did everyone else. The reality is that he is wrong. I can certainly confirm that my right hon. and learned Friend has been reviewing the tax treatment of mortgage protection policies for some months. In light of the misguided reports that appeared this morning, he has removed the uncertainty that would otherwise have been removed in the Finance Bill.

**Mr. Blair:** It is strange that the chairman of the Conservative party did not know about that—or perhaps it is not so strange. Has not the situation arisen because the Government are cutting mortgage help to the unemployed and therefore forcing all new home owners from 1 October to pay for mortgage insurance, as well as the new insurance tax? Rather than climbing down from the consequences of a mistaken policy, would it not be better to drop the policy that is penalising home owners?

**The Prime Minister:** Finance Bill matters are generally withheld by the Treasury for reasons that even the right hon. Gentleman should understand. We give very generous help to people who are unemployed and in receipt of mortgages. We have provided such help for a long time and no one can question the growth in home ownership that has occurred under this Government. There is only one party in this country that truly supports home ownership and it is sitting on the Government Benches.

**Mr. David Nicholson:** My right hon. Friend will recall, I hope with pleasure, the very successful visit that he paid to Taunton last month. Is he aware that the local Liberal Democrats have produced, as an estimate of the policing costs for that visit, the wholly spurious and fantastic figure of £500,000; whereas the Avon and Somerset constabulary has said that it cost £2,000? Does not my right hon. Friend agree that this is typical of the dishonesty and the bogus statistics being used by both Opposition parties in the local election campaign?

**The Prime Minister:** There does seem to be some slight difference between the two estimates of the cost of my visit to Taunton. As to the substantive underlying

point that my hon. Friend raises, it is the case—and it has been so for many years—that public figures, particularly those who are answerable to the public, must and do travel around the country. If the Liberal party is suggesting that public figures should not travel around the country because public disorder results from such visits from time to time, I do not think that the people of this country would accept that proposition.

**Mr. Ashdown:** When it comes to bogus statistics I suspect that the people of this country know very well where they are coming from.

I welcome the very clear statement that the Secretary of State for Defence made just a few moments ago that, whatever action Britain might take in Bosnia, we would not act unilaterally. Does the Prime Minister agree that the situation now developing in Bosnia and Croatia must give cause for grave concern and that, if the conflict is not to spread disastrously, it is vital and urgent that the international community makes every effort to ensure that the second front of confrontation that has now opened in Croatia is closed as soon as possible?

**The Prime Minister:** I hoped for a second that the right hon. Gentleman was about to clear up the dispute about the cost of my visit to Taunton. Perhaps he will do that on another occasion.

As to the main part of the right hon. Gentleman's question about Croatia, there is no doubt that yesterday's Croatian attack, in which some United Nations peacekeepers were wounded, and the retaliation today by the Serbs, have created a very serious situation, as has the Bosnian parties' decision not to extend the cessation of hostilities agreement. As the right hon. Gentleman may know, the UN Security Council has called on the Croatians to halt their offensive in west Slavonia and I hope that the Serbs will also stop retaliating against Croatian towns and cities. It is a serious and a grave situation; no one can have any doubt about that. Over many months the United Nations forces, both in Croatia and in Bosnia, have helped to limit the scale and the extent of the conflict. That has been the case for two years. I warned more than a month ago that returning to all-out war could make the position of the United Nations protection forces absolutely untenable. I repeat that warning today. Neither in Croatia nor in Bosnia will renewed fighting produce a satisfactory settlement—or a settlement of any sort.

## Deregulation

Q2. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will set up a seminar about expediting his deregulation plans for the Ministers he has appointed with responsibility for deregulation in all Departments. [20107]

**The Prime Minister:** From time to time I hold meetings with colleagues to take stock of progress on deregulation. My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade most recently met the appropriate Ministers on 27 April and discussed progress on deregulation measures and steps to improve enforcement procedures.

**Mr. Steen:** The Prime Minister's personal crusade to rid the country of red tape is greatly welcomed by Conservative Members, but is not the real problem at operational level, where officials are more zealous in enforcing regulations than in trying to reduce the impact of regulations that affect our industries' competitiveness with European countries which do not have all those rules? Will the Prime Minister, therefore, take a fresh initiative that will get to the root of the problem?

**The Prime Minister:** We are looking at the over-zealous enforcement of regulations. My hon. Friend is right. At national and local levels, over-zealous enforcement of regulations, particularly those affecting small businesses, causes a great deal of distress and worry. He is equally right that deregulation is central to our economic policy. He may be reassured to know that we now have a programme whereby more than 1,000 regulations are earmarked for amendment or repeal and we expect to have dealt with about half of them by the end of the year.

## Engagements

Q3. **Mrs. Ewing:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 2 May. [20108]

**The Prime Minister:** I refer the hon. Lady to the answer I gave some moments ago.

**Mrs. Ewing:** Now that the Prime Minister has finally plucked up the courage to allow the voters of Perth and Kinross to take their democratic decision, is it his intention to endorse the views of the Secretary of State for Scotland that any reference to Scotland as a region is merely a matter of geographical error, or will he state clearly that Scotland is indeed a nation and not a region, and, therefore, we should have the right to self-determination? When he is in Scotland this weekend, will he launch an educational project to tell his Back Benchers the difference between a region and a nation?

**The Prime Minister:** There are four nations within the United Kingdom. Scotland is one of them. I look to see it remaining in the United Kingdom and I very much regret that the hon. Lady and her parliamentary colleagues seek to make it independent and outside the United Kingdom.

**Sir Peter Fry:** Will my right hon. Friend find time today to compare his current gas and electricity bills with the size of those bills only a few years ago? Will he reflect on the success of the Government's policy in producing real reductions in the charge for energy? Will he join me in wondering how local government candidates representing the new, clean Labour party can produce leaflets which say that the Government are bleeding us dry through privatised gas and electricity companies? Does he agree that the new, clean Labour party is using the same dirty tactics of the old, discredited Labour party?

**The Prime Minister:** My hon. Friend puts the matter exceedingly clearly and well and I entirely agree with him. There is no doubt that in general prices have fallen in the privatised industries, though that is not remotely what Opposition Members expected. The right hon. Gentleman, now the leader of the Labour party, once said of electricity privatisation:

"it is barely an issue that prices will rise because of privatisation."—[*Official Report*, 12 December 1988; Vol. 143, c. 684.]

He was wrong then and he is wrong now.

Q4. **Dr. Lynne Jones:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 2 May. [20109]

**The Prime Minister:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

**Dr. Jones:** The Prime Minister will be aware from the latest economic figures that a large proportion of the 0.8 per cent. growth in the first quarter was attributed not to manufacturing but to sales of national lottery tickets. Is not the Prime Minister concerned that using the proceeds of the lottery to enrich one or perhaps two Tory Members will put the faltering recovery in further jeopardy? Will the right hon. Gentleman have a word with the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) and ask him to pay the money back?

**The Prime Minister:** I am inclined to say to the hon. Lady, come off it. The growth in the economy was 4 per cent. last year, and is estimated at 3 per cent. this year and 3 per cent. next year. When did the Labour party in government ever produce such growth figures? The answer is that it never did. The hon. Lady knows that growth has primarily been built on exports. When was there an export record similar to that which British industry has enjoyed over the past 14 months? Nine or 10 months out of the last 13 or 14 months, there has been a new record in exports as our competitiveness and capacity to penetrate markets in Europe and the rest of the world increase. That is what is happening with economic growth at the moment, and it has never been matched by the Labour party.

## Points of Order

3.30 pm

**Mr. Richard Burden** (Birmingham, Northfield): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Can you advise me of the implications for the procedure of the House of research published today indicating that Ministers appointed by the present Prime Minister or the previous Prime Minister hold a total of 125 directorships and 30 consultancies?

**Madam Speaker:** That is not a point of order. The hon. Gentleman ought to table a question to seek information of that nature.

**Mr. Hugh Bayley** (York): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I seek your guidance, because I believe that the Prime Minister inadvertently misled the House when he suggested that the rate of growth under the last Labour Government was lower than under this Conservative Government. While the Conservatives have been in office, growth—

**Madam Speaker:** Order. That is not a point of order. The House must get accustomed to what points of order are all about. If the hon. Gentleman wants to correct the Prime Minister, the Order Paper is available for him to do so.

## Forensic Testing (Road Deaths)

3.31 pm

**Mr. Andrew Miller** (Ellesmere Port and Neston): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to provide for the forensic testing of those alleged to be involved in causing death as a result of road traffic incidents.

I do so following representations made to me by the family of Thomas Wellman, many of whose members live in my constituency. Mr. Wellman died after being hit by a driver who was over the limit and whose punishment was in the same league as that given to Eric Cantona—community service. My Bill would take a small step towards dealing with the horrific issues arising from drink-driving.

Throughout the European Union, 50,000 people are killed every year on the roads, which is the equivalent of an A320 airbus crashing every day of the week. The latest provisional figures for the United Kingdom suggest that 3,651 people died on our roads in 1994, which is the equivalent of an A320 airbus crashing every week that Parliament sits. If we saw road deaths in those terms, the House might take the issue much more seriously.

From time to time, the House deals with the causes of that carnage. For example, the hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) has just piloted a Bill through Committee covering the testing of new drivers. Such measures are important. Christopher Brown of the statistics directorate of the Department of Transport states:

"We cannot prevent people aging but we could prevent all road deaths if only, as road users, we took more care."

On 22 March, I received an interesting answer from the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department after tabling a number of parliamentary questions about the role of coroners:

"The available information collected on deaths reported to coroners is published in an annual Home Office Statistical Bulletin.

The latest bulletin, 'Statistics of Death Reported to Coroners: England and Wales, 1993', issue 7/94, was published on 21 April 1994 and is available in the Library. Specific information on road deaths is not collected separately".—[*Official Report*, 22 March 1995; Vol. 257, c. *201*.]

That really is not good enough. I would ask the Minister to speak to his colleagues and treat this as a matter of urgency. Coroners, police and magistrates must be required to maintain statistics properly, so that some of these issues can be dealt with in a less haphazard way.

The Bill deals with two aspects: first, testing for blood alcohol levels at the scene of an incident. The latest figures available, for 1993, show that 25 of the 52 police authorities now routinely test after all incidents; a further five test after fatalities or serious injuries; and one tests after all fatalities. In other words, 21 police authorities leave it to the discretion of the officers.

My Bill would make blood alcohol testing mandatory at the incident, except when officers were otherwise committed to the safety and well-being of others. In such cases, tests would have to be done at the earliest practical time. That changes the emphasis in the Road Traffic Act 1988 to one of compulsion, by changing section 6 to read that a constable

"will require him to provide a specimen",

instead of the current wording, which is "may". Similarly, the Bill would change section 6 to require the person allegedly causing a death to give a sample, by changing "may" to "will" in the relevant subsections.

The second category concerns a person who allegedly caused a crash but was himself hospitalised. Section 9 of the 1988 Act covers that. My hon. Friend the Member for Wallsend (Mr. Byers) sought to improve its wording in Committee on the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill, but was told by the Minister that blood samples could be taken only by registered medical practitioners. The BMA, he said, would be very unhappy about samples being taken from someone who was unconscious and had not given his consent. Although the Minister was sympathetic to the point, he said that the Government could not move towards such a policy, because our law fundamentally depends on the consent of the person involved. I understand the BMA's position, but I cannot say that I agree with it. There is always a broader social aspect to be considered.

I believe, however, that I can now present the House with a mechanism which overcomes this ethical argument. My discussions with the BMA suggest that it would regard it as acceptable, too. The changes that I propose to section 9 would have the effect of a sample being taken and provided for analysis at the earliest possible time, provided that the sampling does not have a detrimental effect on the health of the patient.

My provision would not allow the prosecuting authority access to the information until the patient was well enough to give consent. If he subsequently refused consent, the courts would be empowered to interpret his refusal against the background of other information available to them. I believe that refusal without medical cause should always be interpreted thus, and be subject to interpretation by the courts.

There are huge technical difficulties in testing for intoxicants other than alcohol, except under laboratory conditions. Section 10 of the 1988 Act must be enforced to ensure that drug abusers as well as drinkers cannot avoid prosecution. Consistent with my earlier reference to people alleged to have caused a death who are themselves hospitalised, I think that any refusal to provide a sample under section 10 should be subject to interpretation by the courts.

Following all these changes, enforcement should take place at the earliest opportunity, to ensure that forensic samples have the maximum value.

These are small changes to the law, and, when the Bill is published, I should like some sign from the Government that they will give me clear support to enable our common objective to be achieved. The families of victims killed on the roads deserve the maximum support from society, which the law fails to give them at present.

Cases like that of Thomas Wellman regularly occur throughout the country—many hon. Members have had them brought to their attention—but they could and should be avoided. This House should make it absolutely clear in the strongest possible terms that we will not defend the drink-driver.

*Question put and agreed to.*

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Andrew Miller, Mr. Nick Ainger, Mr. Stephen Byers, Dr. Michael Clark, Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody, Mr. Peter Bottomley, Ms Glenda Jackson, Mr. Robert Key, Mr. Ken Livingstone and Mr. Ian Pearson.

## Forensic Testing (Road Deaths)

Mr. Andrew Miller accordingly presented a Bill to provide for the forensic testing of those alleged to be involved in causing death as a result of road traffic incidents: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 14 July, and to be printed. [Bill 112.]

**Mr. Barry Porter** (Wirral, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. It is fairly widely known that, on Thursday of this week, arrangements have been made for Mr. Gerry Adams of Sinn Fein to launch in the House of Commons a book that he has apparently written. I do not know what the rules are or what guidance is given on such matters, but presumably an hon. Member has sponsored a room for Mr. Adams, who wishes the part of the United Kingdom that he inhabits to be removed from the jurisdiction of the House of Commons.

Is there any guidance to be given? Are there any relevant rules? Perhaps you could suggest to the hon. Member who has done this that it might have been ill-advised.

**Madam Speaker:** Accommodation in the House of Commons may not be used for commercial purposes. *[Interruption.]* Order. This is a very important point of order, and a genuine one too, I may say.

As I was saying, the accommodation in the House of Commons may not be used for commercial purposes such as launching books, especially those written by persons who are not Members of the House. The hon. Member who booked the Jubilee Room for that purpose will have to make alternative arrangements elsewhere.

*Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Order [19 December]:*

That this House, at its rising on Friday 5th May, do adjourn till Tuesday 9th May.—[*Mr. Kirkhope.*]

*Question agreed to.*

# Orders of the Day

## Atomic Energy Authority Bill

*As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.*

*Ordered,*

That the Atomic Energy Authority Bill, as amended, be considered in the following order, namely, New Clauses, amendments relating to Clause 1, Schedule 1, Clauses 2 to 6, Schedule 2, Clauses 7 and 8, Schedule 3, Clause 9, Schedule 4, Clauses 10 to 14, New Schedules.—*[Mr. Page.]*

### New clause 1

ACCESS TO POLICE NATIONAL COMPUTER

'(1) Nothing in this Act shall entitle any person or persons to whom anything is transferred by a transfer scheme under this Act to have access to any criminal record information held on the police national computer, notwithstanding that any such access was held by the Authority at the time of transfer.

(2) In this section, "criminal record information" and "police national computer" shall have such meaning as the Secretary of State may by Order made by statutory instrument provide.'.— *[Mr. Cohen.]*

*Brought up, and read the First time.*

3.42 pm

**Mr. Harry Cohen** (Leyton): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

New clause 1 is designed as a probe to try to get some answers from the Government on this issue. Serious implications arise from extending access to the police national computer to the Atomic Energy Authority. New clause 1 seeks to stop such access.

According to official crime statistics, about one in three males in this country and one in 10 females have a criminal record and that excludes most motoring offences. Some of those convictions are minor, some happened a long time ago and some are spent under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. That is sensitive information, which should not automatically preclude someone from getting a job. Such status should not constantly be used against the individual by the state, employers, would-be employers or other individuals.

There is a danger of unauthorised access to and use of the police national computer data and widening direct access to it broadens the scope for malpractice.

On 22 March, in a parliamentary written answer to the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence), the Government agreed to widen direct access to the police national computer to include the Atomic Energy Authority on behalf of the whole nuclear industry. There are many implications, and I shall deal with some of them.

In 1986, the Police Complaints Authority investigated a misuse of personal data on the PNC, and a report was made to Parliament—HC 425—in July 1986. The report suggested that the following recommendations should form the basis of Instructions to each police force. It said that

"access to personal data held on the PNC must be permitted only for purposes necessary for the efficient discharge of bona fide police duties, and personal and private use must be strictly forbidden . . . It is essential to secure the integrity of the PNC. To achieve this, relevant transactions must be subject to monitoring and validation by random sampling; validation must reach the actual reason for a transaction being originated."

Will the same rules, guidelines and recommendations apply to the AEA when it has access, as the Government are allowing?

3.45 pm

The report continues:

"accurate records of transactions must be made which identify the persons responsible for initiating and handling a request for information . . . all officers who may have cause to access the PNC must be directed and reminded from time to time that PNC records are confidential, that such information must not be disclosed to unauthorised persons and that abuse of the system will render them liable to disciplinary or statutory sanctions."

Again, will that be the case once the AEA has such powers?

The report then says:

"since originators may be called upon to justify their transactions possibly weeks or months after the event, they should make a record of sufficient detail to refresh their memories in order to avoid unwarranted suspicion of malpractice . . . officers who receive requests for information from any person which would necessitate access to the PNC must satisfy themselves that the purpose can properly be regarded as a genuine police matter before responding to such requests."

Those were the recommendations of the Police Complaints Authority in 1986. Can the Under-Secretary of State give a firm guarantee that similar recommendations will be met by those to whom the functions are being transferred—in this case, the AEA, if it obtains access to police records as proposed in the parliamentary answer on 22 March?

It is worth noting that the 1990 annual report of the Police Complaints Authority said:

"over the past year there has been a noticeable increase in the number of complaints about police officers making use of the PNC or force intelligence records for other than official purposes".

The 1990 report also drew attention to the fact that the PCA had used its powers

"on several occasions to recommend disciplinary charges to be preferred against officers who break the rules . . . this seems to have upset a few of the chief officers (of police) who do not consider it serious enough to warrant taking formal disciplinary action."

What will be the view of the AEA in this respect? Will disciplinary action be taken against those who breach the rules, whatever the rules are? That is one of the questions I am asking the Government.

In 1992, the PCA emphasised that the guidelines

"are still relevant and we commend them to forces."

That is a gentle reminder that the recommendations of the 1986 report are still required for the police. They should therefore apply to the AEA and others who will get access to PNC records.

The 10th report of the Data Protection Registrar, in 1994, noted:

"there is something special about criminal convictions."

This suggests that the body responsible for the protection of individuals is hinting that criminal record data should be afforded statutory protection. There should be statutory protection for those records across the board before handing out access powers to Government Departments and agencies such as the AEA.

The implication of all of that is that, nine years after the publication of HC 425, the PCA's recommendations have not been adequately implemented by all police forces, and personal data held on the PNC are not safe. If the police are having difficulty getting their house in order, how can private sector organisations that receive transferred rights be expected to do so?

On 15 December 1994, the Prime Minister revised the vetting procedure, and steps were taken to widen access to the PNC. Government Departments now have some direct access to the PNC, but there has been little discussion of the safeguards that are required to protect those who are vetted and to protect individuals from misuse of wider access to the PNC.

Was the Data Protection Registrar consulted on giving the AEA and others that access to police records? What did she recommend, if she was consulted? That is a question that the Minister should answer. For instance, what instructions has the Minister issued about access to the PNC by the AEA? Perhaps he can place that information on the record.

When I asked the Department of Trade and Industry about its access to PNC records, it said that it would be confined to a small number of personnel within the DTI security section, and that similar levels of operational, technical and physical security would be applied to information obtained from the PNC as would apply at the PNC itself. In addition, compliance audits would be undertaken by representatives of the police service and Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary. That is all very well for the DTI. Will the same conditions apply to the AEA?

My new clause does not prohibit access to the PNC for all time. The existing arrangements could apply: the AEA police could liaise with the official police who control the PNC for information. The Minister must be aware that the Home Office is about to outline its own action following its consultation paper "Disclosure of Criminal Records for Employment Purposes", Cm 2319. That paper explored the option that official vetting should be sanctioned by legislation.

The envisaged circumstances in which vetting is, or might be, appropriate included national security; maintaining probity in the administration of the law; protecting the vulnerable—for example, children and the elderly; national treasures—for example, museums; licensing "fit and proper" persons—for example, taxi drivers and school inspectors; investigation of crime by prosecuting agencies other than the police—for example, the Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise; and crime prevention, if there was a clear public interest at stake and evidence of serious risk to members of the public.

Will those categories, or perhaps other specific categories, be extended to the AEA—by stealth, perhaps—for obtaining direct access to the PNC information?

Clearly, the effect of my new clause can be changed by Home Office legislation once Parliament has established a vetting agency. We should not really be making this change before the procedure is looked at as a whole. Parliament would have to approve the vetting procedures; unlike the current Bill, under which the Secretary of State can transfer the ability to vet without recourse to Parliament. In my view, that should be unacceptable in a democracy.

There is no need for an automatic transfer of vetting powers. Private organisations that need to vet against police records will be authorised by the Home Office legislation, which establishes a vetting agency, so I do not think that there is a case for extending that now.

Those are the most general points in relation to the new clause, but I shall make some wider points as well.

This Bill is about preparing for the privatisation of the Atomic Energy Authority. Various parts will be privatised—perhaps AEA Technology or schemes involving various companies, sections or individuals. The disposal of those parts of the AEA can take place without any further reference to Parliament. Clause 7 allows the AEA to sell off the companies established, as long as it has the consent of the Secretary of State and the Treasury.

Where does that leave security vetting and PNC access by the AEA as a whole? Will the powers pass to those parts that have been privatised? That would be a major extension of the powers. It would mean giving privatised firms access to state records—people's criminal records—on the PNC. Will the access be allowed just to the Government division of the AEA? If so, will it be only for its own purposes, or will there be extensions, so that it will be able to use that access for all sorts of other purposes? We need answers.

As well as being in the nuclear business, the AEA covers many other areas, such as the environment, energy, engineering and research and consultancy services. Will access to the records relate to those parts of its work? On the environment, could it mean that someone who had a criminal record as a result of taking part in an anti-road demonstration—we have seen many of those recently—would be automatically banned from a job once the AEA gained access to those records?

What about access to the PNC for the research and consultancy services in which the AEA now participates? That potentially involves a huge widening of the powers. At the far end of that, the AEA could make a business out of its access to PNC records. What are the limitations?

What are the role and the scope of the AEA police? The Bill is about the Atomic Energy Authority, and there are huge implications for the AEA police. Despite that, they are not even mentioned in the Bill. That is incredible Government neglect, and I hope that the Minister will tell us what their role will be, particularly in relation to the would-be privatised sectors. Will they receive the information from the police national computer, which they could then hand to the privatised companies? I hope that we will have a statement about that.

According to the parliamentary answer of 22 March, the AEA gains access to PNC records on behalf of the entire nuclear industry—Nirex, British Nuclear Fuels and so on. What governs the transfer of the data obtained by the AEA to the rest of the nuclear industry? What governs the subsequent use of that information by the rest of the industry?

We need answers about that before the Government continue to give access in the way specified in the parliamentary answer of 22 March. That answer was the thin end of the wedge. It implies security vetting for employees, potential employees and contractors—that is allegedly its purpose—but it does not lay that out specifically. Access might be obtained for other purposes as well.

The parliamentary answer talks of limited access to the PNC, simply to find out whether an individual has a criminal record. That is only one step away from direct access to the entire record. It is only one step from extending access, which, according to one parliamentary answer is "solely for security vetting" of employees, potential employees and contractors, to other purposes about which we have not been told. Those extensions

*[Mr. Harry Cohen]*

could easily come about by just another written parliamentary answer, as happened in relation to access to the PNC. We should know those points. That is the thin end of the wedge.

Access acknowledges the extraordinary and excessive power of the nuclear industry. No other industry in the country has, or is being given, access to the PNC. Why is the nuclear industry singled out? Why is it so special that it must have that access to the PNC? If it is so special, why is it being privatised? Surely, if it is so important that it must be carefully controlled by, for example, the AEA police, it should not be in private hands. We need an answer to that.

4 pm

The nuclear industry is almost like a state within a state, with its own police force. Its powers could easily be extended, so that it has its own self-determined powers. Access to PNC records is a step along that path. I do not want this point to be over-emphasised, but I remind the House of the murder of Hilda Murrell in the 1980s. No one knows for sure why that came about, but it has been talked about that she was murdered because of her anti-nuclear campaigning. That point must be borne in mind. That is why we should not give direct access to organisations such as the nuclear industry.

One wonders whether the nuclear industry, after gaining a taste for power exercised in secret, and perhaps after it is privatised, will be restricted purely to security vetting of employees, potential employees and contractors, or whether it might seek to extend its powers and its use of the records to which it gains access.

It is the police's computer. In effect, they are the owners on behalf of the state. They have overall responsibility for its security and safe running. If access is extended, their control is undermined. I wonder whether the Government, when they extended access to the AEA and others, consulted the police? If so, what was their view? The Minister owes it to the House to tell us.

I have spelt out a number of implications. A number of questions arise and need a response from the Minister. I await that response.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Energy (Mr. Richard Page):** The new clause would introduce a specific clause in the Bill to prevent AEA Technology from gaining access to criminal record information held on the police national computer. I share the concern of the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) that access to the computer should be strictly limited, although, in this case, I assure him that his concerns are misplaced and his new clause unnecessary. Having said that, I welcome the opportunity to give a response for the record, which he has requested.

Where required, the UK Atomic Energy Authority directorate of civil nuclear security carries out vetting of authority staff. As its work has nothing to do with AEA Technology's business, it will not be one of those activities that it assumes after vesting. AEA Technology will not therefore have access to the computer either as an incorporated, publicly owned company or as a privatised company. I hope that that goes a long way towards setting the hon. Gentleman's mind at rest.

Discussions in Committee took a different tack in that hon. Members on both sides were so concerned to ensure that AEA Technology staff working in sensitive areas continued to be carefully vetted. As I explained then, it would be a prior condition that all employees of AEA Technology, of a successor company or companies, or, for that matter, of any company working on UKAEA sites that deal with special nuclear material, meet the authority's vetting requirements.

Where AEA Technology undertakes work for other Government customers, it will also have to meet any vetting requirements that they may specify. That means that it will operate on exactly the same basis, and will be subject to exactly the same requirements, as any other private sector contractor undertaking work for Government customers.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me for not going down the enticing byways and highways which he opened up, which go well beyond the scope of the Bill. I am quite sure that you, Madam Speaker, would call me to order if I went down those routes. I hope that my reassurances to the hon. Gentleman will enable him to withdraw his new clause.

**Dr. Lewis Moonie** (Kirkcaldy): I support the new clause. In his lucid presentation, my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) put his finger on one of the Bill's problems—the fact that it leaves far too much unsaid. It would be left to Ministers to come to the Committee or to the House and give assurances on matters which would be far better dealt with by a clause or subsection in the Bill.

In Committee, we spoke at great length about nuclear proliferation and special nuclear materials, and were given many assurances. This year, we are seeking to renew the non-proliferation treaty, but there is nothing specific in the Bill about that, or about the Atomic Energy Authority police force and its continuing role. If AEA Technology must be privatised, the powers of that force must be spelled out again if possible.

I hope that the Department will seriously consider the matters that we raised in Committee and that we will raise today on Report. They are not intended to frustrate in any way the Government's efforts. We have made it perfectly clear that we are opposed in principle to selling AEA Technology, but the new clause has nothing to do with the form or structure of privatisation. It is about the genuine concern over the way in which security matters will continue to be handled. I hope that, on reflection, the Government will propose changes in another place that will go some way towards meeting our concerns.

**Mr. Cohen:** I am grateful to the Minister for his assurances. My speech was longer than his and contained many points, none of which he addressed. I am prepared to withdraw the new clause, but perhaps I could ask him to read my speech and write to me, or, as my hon. Friend the Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie) suggested, address some of those issues when the Bill is in the other place. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

*Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.*

**Schedule 1**

TRANSFER SCHEMES: SUPPLEMENTARY PROVISIONS

*Amendments made:* No. 2, in page 10, leave out lines 34 to 42.

No. 24, in page 11, leave out lines 12 to 14.

No. 3, in page 11, line 33, at end insert—

'(1A) The Authority and any person to whom anything has been transferred in accordance with a transfer scheme may issue a joint certificate stating that any liability specified in the certificate is a liability which was intended to be, and was, vested by virtue of the scheme in such one of them as may be so specified.

(1B) Any certificate under sub-paragraph (1A) above—

(a) shall, if given with the concurrence of every person who is entitled to enforce the liability at the time of the giving of the certificate, be conclusive evidence for all purposes of the fact referred to in that sub-paragraph, and

(b) shall, in any other case, be conclusive evidence of that fact as between the persons giving or concurring in the giving of the certificate.'.

No. 4, in page 11, line 36, leave out 'such a joint certificate' and insert

'a joint certificate under sub-paragraph (1) or (1A) above'.

No. 5, in page 11, line 36, leave out 'or right' and insert 'right or liability'.—*[Mr. Page.]*

**Clause 2**

POWERS OF SECRETARY OF STATE

**Mr. Robert Jackson** (Wantage): I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 2, line 9, at end insert—

'(1A) No direction under subsection (1) above shall be given unless a draft of such a direction has been laid before both Houses of Parliament and approved by members of each House.'.

**Madam Speaker:** With this, it will be convenient to discuss amendment No. 10, in page 3, line 14, at end insert—

'(9) The Secretary of State shall not direct the Authority to make more than one scheme unless such a direction in his opinion will promote the national interest.'.

**Mr. Jackson:** Thank you, Madam Speaker, for selecting my amendment for debate. It reflects the concern that I expressed on Second Reading. I should have liked to take part in the debate in Committee on an Opposition amendment which raised the same issue. Unfortunately, as the record of the proceedings in Standing Committee will show, I was prevented from serving on it by the intervention of a Government Whip. Therefore, I was unable to take part in that debate and to represent my constituents, among whom are numbered almost a third of the Atomic Energy Authority's employees. The amendment reflects their interests, and, I believe, the national interest.

The purpose of my amendment is to ensure that Parliament has an opportunity to consider the structure of AEA Technology as it will be when it is privatised. I should say at the outset that it is obvious that the amendment gives considerable discretion to the Government as to the form and timing of the parliamentary debate which it envisages.

In Committee, the Minister and a number of my hon. Friends chose to interpret a similar amendment as requiring the Government to seek the authorisation of Parliament for specific details of the sale, in circumstances which would be commercially disruptive. I do not believe that that was a proper interpretation of the Opposition amendment, nor do I accept that it would be a proper interpretation of the amendment which I am moving.

For the avoidance of doubt, this amendment is drafted to enable the Government to fulfil their terms by making an early statement of their broad scheme of privatisation at a time of their choosing and not at all at a time which would be commercially disruptive. The Opposition spokesman tried to make that point in Committee, but I am afraid that he was brushed aside. I am sure that he would confirm now that he understands the matter in the same way.

**Dr. Moonie:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for tabling the amendment, which gives us another opportunity to consider the whole question of parliamentary accountability. I can confirm—I shall be speaking at more length later—that we shall indeed be supporting the amendment. If anything, the amendment is a much better way of handling the issue than the way in which we chose to debate it in Committee. I hope that the hon. Gentleman's amendment will be given consideration.

**Mr. Jackson:** Why do I believe that the amendment is necessary? The speech of my right hon. Friend the Minister for Industry and Energy on Second Reading showed that he at least recognised the sensitivity of whether AEA Technology was to be privatised as an entity or to be broken up for disposal. During that debate, he sought to give me some assurances on the matter. Specifically, he said:

"the Government agree that AEA Technology should continue to be managed as a single, integrated whole".

My purpose in moving the amendment is to ensure that this House and another place are given an opportunity to see that this commitment is met or that we are given an explanation, if it cannot be met, of why that should be so.

I fully accepted what my right hon. Friend the Minister said in that debate about the inevitability of a degree of uncertainty. He was justified in saying:

"Decisions about the method and timing of the sale can similarly be taken only in the light of market circumstances at the time",

and that final decisions on the form of privatisation must

"depend on AEA Technology's performance in the months ahead, on the needs and requirements of customers and on confirmation from the market that a unitary sale will secure best overall value for money for the taxpayer."—[*Official Report*, 14 March 1995; Vol. 256, c. 707.]

If the Government cannot for those good reasons make a clear statement about the form of privatisation, in line with their commitment to AEA Technology as a "single, integrated whole", they should be prepared to make a statement to Parliament when they are able to do so. The purpose of my amendment is to provide such an opportunity for the Government.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Energy argued in Committee—I dare say that he will try to argue again today—that the amendment was not necessary, because the privatisation measure simply conformed to standard-form privatisation provisions that the House has approved on previous occasions. That point was made in the Department of Trade and Industry's press release, published on the same day as the Atomic Energy Authority Bill. I must tell my hon. Friend that I cannot accept that argument.

I have looked at the other cases of privatisation, and it is quite clear that there is a much more fundamental question mark hanging over the structure of AEA Technology and privatisation than there was in respect of the structure of other industries when they were privatised.

*[Mr. Jackson]*

For example, in the case of the electricity industry, there was a restructuring before privatisation, enabled by the Electricity Act 1989, which made it clear that the industry was to be sold as 12 supply companies and two generating companies. Similarly, the Water Act 1989 created 10 water and sewerage companies, successor companies to the regional water boards. In short, Parliament was fully apprised of the basic form of the proposed privatisation in those important instances, even before publication of the Bills to privatise those industries.

With regard to AEA Technology, there is, however, a fundamental ambiguity of approach on the part of the Government. It is public knowledge that Barclays de Zoete Wedd consultants recommended the break-up of AEA Technology. We may deduce that my right hon. Friend the Minister for Industry and Energy rejected that advice on behalf of the Government when he said that the company should be managed as a "single, integrated whole", although it has never been explained to the House why the BZW recommendations have been rejected.

On the other hand, my right hon. Friend qualified that commitment by reference to "market circumstances", and what the Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Energy said in Committee represents further confirmation of that ambiguity.

4.15 pm

For example, on 23 March, the Under-Secretary said that a "unitary sale" was possibly "achievable", but then told the Committee:

"we cannot be certain that that is the best way forward."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee D*, 23 March 1995; c. 16-17.]

In the light of that comment, what price the Minister of State's remark on Second Reading about the Government's preference for a "single, integrated whole"?

The truth is that the Government have allowed a major question mark to form over the future structure of AEA Technology at the time of privatisation, which means that the House has none of the assurances about structure that it had at the time of earlier privatisations.

**Mr. Andrew Miller** (Ellesmere Port and Neston): In view of the hon. Gentleman's detailed knowledge of such matters relating to his constituency, does he know anything about the disposal of the facility services division? I understand that that consisted of 950 people, yet it seems to have mysteriously disappeared during the Committee stage.

**Mr. Jackson:** That was simply an exercise, which would have been perfectly possible under the existing arrangements, whereby the Atomic Energy Authority is contracting out the provision of facility services. It is a matter for the management of AEA Technology. I happen to support what is being done in that instance, and it affects neither the structure of the Bill nor the point that I seek to make about the future structure of AEA Technology at the point of privatisation.

I am saying that the Government have allowed a question mark to form over the issue, so that the House does not have the assurances about the structure of AEAT that it had about the structure of other organisations at the time of earlier privatisations. It is therefore appropriate to vary the standard-form privatisation provisions—which are not carved on tablets of stone—to make possible the parliamentary debate and vote envisaged by my amendment.

I shall not repeat any of the eight arguments that I advanced on Second Reading on 14 March—they are recorded at columns 732-33 of the *Official Report* of that debate—as to why it is not only in the interests of my constituents who work at AEA Technology but in the national interest that AEAT should be privatised as a single entity. It would seem from the remarks of the Minister of State that he at least has found those arguments persuasive.

The purpose of my amendment is simply to give the Government an opportunity, in presenting a broad scheme of privatisation, either to say that they accept those arguments or to provide an explanation of why, in view of possible future "market circumstances", they have not been found valid. I believe that the Government have a duty to do that. AEA Technology is not the Government's property but public property. The Government have a duty to the House and to another place to explain and justify their policy in such an important matter.

It may be for the convenience of the House if I say now that I shall certainly press the amendment to a Division unless the Government are prepared to accept it. I may well lose the vote, but I hope that the proceedings will be noticed in another place.

The Government sometimes behave as though they regarded the House, its Standing Committees and its elected Members as a dignified rather than a working part of the constitution. The record suggests that their unelected Lordships are not only more dignified but can also be more effective than we in this House are allowed to be. I hope that, on this occasion, it will not once again fall to them to ensure that the Government are held to account for their actions.

**Mr. Robert Maclennan** (Caithness and Sutherland): I support the purpose of the hon. Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson) and I shall adopt his reasoning. I need not retract a word of it, nor need I add much.

I believe that the whole House has recognised that if AEA Technology is to be privatised, it is proper, and in the national interest, that it should be privatised as an integral whole, with the advantages of synergy arising from the different operations carried out by the company at present. The Government themselves, in the person of the Minister of State, have said that that is their preference. Doubt was cast upon that by the words of the Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Energy, who has said that it may be neither possible nor desirable in the commercial circumstances to proceed in the manner that the Minister of State thought appropriate.

That being so, it would be totally wrong for the House to agree to the passage of a provision which would allow the Government to do what they like by way of a scheme or schemes without any proper parliamentary scrutiny of the structure that the Government have in mind. In other contexts, such sweeping powers have been referred to as Henry VIII clauses. The other place has drawn attention to the undesirability of such dispensing powers being given to Ministers to do as they choose on the back of a general provision of law.

The case for integral privatisation is clear, and has been voiced by hon. Members on both sides of the House. It need not be repeated. The amendment tabled by the hon.

Member for Wantage is strongly supported by his neighbour, my hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Mr. Rendel), who spoke in Committee on a number of matters affecting the interests of the industry. The arguments have commended themselves to hon. Members on both sides of the House, and it would be extremely foolish of the Minister to ignore the collective wisdom of the House of Commons on the matter. I hope that he will not do so, and that he will tell the House that the Government intend to accept the amendment.

**Mr. Ian Bruce** (South Dorset): I support my hon. Friend the Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson) for reasons of tactics. We are sent here as Back-Bench Members to look after the interests of our constituents, but it is appalling that the Whips are able to organise matters in such a way that proper argument cannot be made in Committee. You will well know, Madam Speaker, as the great guardian of Back Benchers' rights, how matters must be organised in such a way as to try to allow the Government to get their business.

It might be helpful for the House to know that when the Bill was going into Committee, both my hon. Friend the Member for Wantage and I—as the Members representing the majority of people who would be affected by the privatisation—spoke individually to the Whips. We acknowledged that, with a small Government majority, it would perhaps be unreasonable to expect that both of us should sit on the Committee, as we would both be in a position to push our own individual constituency views against the majority view of the House.

I said to the Whips that, while I was keen to serve on the Committee, clearly my hon. Friend—having the larger number of constituents involved and more questions about the Bill—would be more suitable for selection. The Whips smiled, said that that was a good idea and thanked me kindly. Imagine my surprise when I found out that my hon. Friend had not been selected for the Committee. When he got another member of the Committee to stand aside in his favour, he found that the Whips rapidly ensured that he did not get on to that Committee.

When I vote against the Government tonight—for the first time—to support my colleague, it will be to say that the House must be allowed to discuss matters that are of great concern to individual constituents. My hon. Friend the Member for Wantage is no maverick and would have discussed the matters sensibly in Committee, which would have been that much stronger for having the benefit of his knowledge.

I shall support my hon. Friend if the Minister does not accept the amendment. The Minister, along with many of his ministerial colleagues, may well scratch his head and wonder why the Whips should use those tactics to try to keep trouble at bay and to deliver the vote without getting the very best deal and making sure that we look at the legislation properly. I regret to have to say that I shall vote against the Government if they do not accept the amendment.

**Mr. Miller:** I shall add briefly to the comments that have already been made.

In my intervention on the hon. Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson), I asked about one subsidiary. I understand his logic in saying that it is not within the science base, so it can be hived off without damage to the important science base in the heart of his constituency, although I do not agree.

My worry is that there are consistent and persistent rumours about the sale of other subsidiaries. Harwell Dosimeters has been sold to EMS Medical Group Ltd. of Stonehouse, Gloucestershire for an undisclosed sum and seven business areas have been identified for sale—Conforma in Risley, Cheshire, which is close to my home and my constituency, is among them. I am worried that, with that gradual fragmentation, there will be cracks in the strength of the science base of the operation.

I understand the hon. Gentleman's argument about that one subsidiary, but it cannot hold true for all the parts about which there are persistent rumours. It is time that the Government came clean about what they are doing.

**Dr. Moonie:** I shall speak briefly in support of the amendment tabled by the hon. Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson) and amendment No. 10, tabled in my name and that of my hon. Friends.

When I realised that the hon. Member for Wantage was going to table the amendment, I made it clear that the Opposition parties would be very likely to support it. I am pleased that he is determined to push his amendment to a vote because we shall certainly be in the Lobby with him. One always gets wild notions when a Government rebellion is on the cards, but alas it is a very small rebellion—only two Conservative Members are present, but we can always hope that others may be lurking in the wings, waiting to come into the Lobby with us.

I wondered why the Report stage had been brought forward to this week—a week that is traditionally very light because of the local elections—especially as the Government must have had adequate notice that they would have a rebellion on their hands. I then realised, however, that Conservative Members would not be in their constituencies to help local government candidates. They would all be here, giving them the best service that they could possibly give in the circumstances—by not appearing in their constituencies—with the honourable exception of the hon. Members for Wantage and for South Dorset (Mr. Bruce), of course.

Amendment No. 1 states:

"No direction under subsection (1) above shall be given unless a draft of such a direction has been laid before both Houses of Parliament and approved by members of each House."

There is an important distinction between the form of this amendment and the amendments that we discussed in Committee. This amendment is much superior.

In Committee, we were considering securing parliamentary approval for any disposal scheme that the Government produced for AEA Technology. The Minister was able to say that such approval would be difficult, that information might be commercially sensitive and that time pressures would be placed on us, which would preclude any such resolution of the House being sought. Perhaps there is justification for that view, but the Minister has no justification for refusing to give the very reasonable assurances that his hon. Friends have requested this afternoon.

Amendment No. 1 says:

"No direction . . . shall be given unless a draft of such a direction has been laid before both Houses of Parliament and"

so approved. That consideration by both Houses of Parliament therefore takes place much earlier, which gives Members of the House a chance to put the seal of approval on that deal.

*[Dr. Moonie]*

An important point of principle is at stake, which has been mentioned by hon. Members on both sides of the House. It is fundamentally wrong of the Government to take into the hands of the Executive powers that should legitimately be left in hon. Members' hands. They are entitled to make such decisions.

4.30 pm

We are currently in the disgraceful position in which our entire atomic energy generating capacity, with the exception of Magnox reactors, can be sold off without further reference to the House of Commons. Regardless of who is in power, that abuse of the Executive's prerogative is wrong and should be resisted. One hopes that it will be resisted by hon. Members on both sides of the House today.

Amendment No. 10 says:

"The Secretary of State shall not direct the Authority to make more than one scheme unless such a direction in his opinion will promote the national interest."

A great deal of anxiety was expressed in Committee and on Second Reading about the form that a putative sale would take. It is obvious that the management and work force of AEA Technology would much prefer the company to be sold off as a going concern—a single entity. As we discussed the matter in Committee, we must consider it in a slightly different form on Report; hence the wording of our amendment No. 10, which would allow the Secretary of State to draw up more than one scheme of transfer only if he believed that to be in "the national interest".

There appears to have been confusion in Ministers' minds about the way in which the AEA should be sold. On Second Reading, the Minister for Industry and Energy said:

"the Government agree that AEA Technology should continue to be managed as a single, integrated whole".—[*Official Report*, 14 March 1995; Vol. 256, c. 707.]

That is great; none of us could find fault with that.

However, in Committee, there were signs of rapid back-pedalling by the new Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Energy, who contradicted his senior colleague, saying that it is far too early to make irrevocable decisions about the shape and form of a privatised AEA Technology. One hopes that today the Minister will clear up the obvious problems that have arisen between him and his colleague.

Parliament should decide the form of the sale. Separate sales might well be the only way of disposing of AEA Technology, but if so, those sales should be made only when they are demonstrably in the national interest.

The Minister may intend to tell us that it is impossible to define what is in the national interest. However, the Government have already made a perfectly adequate stab at defining what is in the national interest in the Atomic Energy (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1981. We shall refer to that definition in a future debate, because one of our amendments restores that power, which the Government have deleted in clause 7 so that national interest may not apply.

Section 1(4) of the 1981 Act provides:

"Where a disposal by the Authority would not in their opinion be consistent with the exercise or performance of their functions, the disposal may only be made—

(a) if in the Secretary of State's opinion it will promote the national interest; and

(b) under and in accordance with directions given by him under the said section 3."

Subsection (5) provides:

"Where a disposal by the Secretary of State would in his opinion be inconsistent with promoting or controlling the development of atomic energy, the disposal may only be made if in his opinion it will promote the national interest."

So that has already been part of an Act. In case there might be any dubiety, or problems with future studies of the Act, a helpful footnote was provided, which said exactly what the national interest was:

"National interest. It was suggested by Mackinnon J. in *Consett Iron Co Ltd v. Clavering Trustees* (1934) . . . that 'national interest' may be considered as something which is to be distinguished from the private interest of individuals; that the expression is akin to the economic doctrine of 'the greatest good of the greatest number'."

We appear to be widening things substantially, Madam Speaker. It is not my fault that the Government have chosen to delete those powers in that Act.

"It is submitted that the expression is synonymous with 'public benefit'"

and that

"'public benefit' must involve a direct benefit."

It continues:

"The question whether a particular thing is in the national interest is a question of the times and is a question of fact . . . It is to be decided in the light of all the circumstances and conditions as they exist at the present time notwithstanding that they would probably not have been specifically envisaged by the legislature when this Act was passed".

There are adequate precedents for considering the national interest in any disposal. The Labour party contends that it would be commercially detrimental to AEA Technology to split up the company and that it would ultimately cause problems for our country by reducing the volume of research that takes place in that very important area.

AEA Technology is a successful company. Whether it is in the public or the private sector, it must be encouraged and allowed to remain a successful company. Through our amendment, we give the Government a chance to ensure that their actions are in the national interest by retaining that provision within the Bill.

**Mr. Alan W. Williams** (Carmarthen): I shall make a few comments in support of amendment Nos. 1 and 10. I echo the comments of the Front-Bench spokesman, my hon. Friend the Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie), about why the Atomic Energy Authority, if it is to be privatised, should be retained intact. I was a member of the Standing Committee that examined the Electricity Bill in 1989. The intention of that legislation was to privatise the nuclear industry, but one can see why the company would operate much more effectively and efficiently as one entity rather than being split into parts.

I was interested to hear the hon. Members for Wantage (Mr. Jackson) and for South Dorset (Mr. Bruce) say that they had been excluded from serving on the Committee by the Whips. I ask the Minister to address that point. I have known both hon. Gentlemen across the Floor of the House over the years. As well as having a constituency interest, the hon. Member for South Dorset has terrific

expertise in the area of nuclear energy. The hon. Member for Wantage was a Science Minister. The expertise of both hon. Gentlemen could have been put to good use by the Committee. It is a sad day for democracy and for the quality of debate in Committee and on the Floor of the House when the Whips Office intervenes in such matters. I ask the Minister to address that point in his remarks.

**Mr. Page:** I fully appreciate the feelings of my hon. Friend the Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson) in this matter. I can also understand his views, as I understand those of my hon. Friend the Member for South Dorset (Mr. Bruce). I assure them both—particularly my hon. Friend the Member for Wantage—that, while they were not physically present during the Committee's consideration of the Bill, they were there in spirit. My hon. Friends' views were very much in my mind when I made the appropriate comments in Committee.

I would like to adjust, through a little shading, the remarks that my hon. Friend the Member for Wantage made about the BZW report. BZW did not recommend breaking up the company, but it said that that option should be considered. I believe that any responsible consultancy firm should consider all the options and not close any automatically without giving them some thought.

The hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Mr. Miller) tried to make a mystery out of standard commercial practice and activities by implying that somehow the disposals were going ahead according to a peculiar and unknown game plan. AEA management made it perfectly clear all along that, privatised or not, the business would be rationalised and that it should focus on core activities. It does not help if the company operates through a series of fragmented activities—interesting as they may be.

**Mr. Miller:** Will the Minister give way?

**Mr. Page:** If the hon. Gentleman will contain his enthusiasm, I shall give way in a moment. The House may be interested to know that one employee performs the task of book drying. That is a very important and a necessary skill, but it is hardly the basis upon which to build an international business.

**Mr. Miller:** I am grateful to the Minister, first, for recognising my enthusiasm and, secondly, for giving way. Will the Minister define the core business of the enterprise? He was unable to do that in Committee and he has just disposed of a small task because he says that it is not a part of the company's core business. Is not the design of hip joints core business? How can the Minister define the core business in a science enterprise?

**Mr. Page:** The hon. Gentleman is obviously an unreconstructed member of the Labour party. When will the Labour party learn that it cannot run businesses better than people who have dedicated their lives to particular skills and techniques? Although the hon. Gentleman might like to dictate to the management of the new company of AEA Technology what it should or should not do, we believe that its skills and management should be given the opportunity to prove themselves in the international marketplace. We shall certainly not try to tell AEA Technology what it can and cannot do.

**Mr. Robert Jackson:** I take it from what my hon. Friend says that it is now clear that the Government will no longer give instructions to AEA management as to the disposal policy.

**Mr. Page:** AEA Technology is still part of Government schemes, but decisions as to what is to be privatised and what is to be disposed of are a matter for the management of AEA Technology. As to the form in which it will enter the private sector, we shall be looking to the management of AEA Technology to lead the way and provide guidance on the way ahead.

**Mr. Adam Ingram** (East Kilbride): As a Minister at the Department of Trade and Industry, will the hon. Gentleman extend that argument and tell us what the Department has in mind in respect of the privatisation of the nuclear industry generally? The management of Scottish Nuclear Ltd., which has shown expertise in bringing down unit costs and making the company productive, is opposed to the merger with Nuclear Electric. Will the Government listen to the management in those circumstances?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris):** Order. Before the Minister answers any questions, let me make it clear that the Bill is specific and that we should remain within the confines of the Bill.

**Mr. Page:** Thank you for your guidance, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I shall abide by what you say, but I was not about to be tempted by the hon. Gentleman's inducements. If he is a little patient, all will be revealed in due course, and will no doubt be a tremendous boost and advancement for the nuclear industry in Britain.

I return to the amendments. Their effect would be to prevent the Secretary of State from directing the authority to make a transfer scheme unless that direction had been approved in draft by both Houses of Parliament. They would also prevent him from directing the authority to make more than one scheme unless, in his opinion, that would promote the national interest.

I appreciate the concern of my hon. Friend the Member for Wantage for his constituents and for the future of AEA Technology as a business. I also understand the arguments put forward by my hon. Friends and Opposition Members in support of the amendments. However, I must also have concern for the interests of the taxpayer in securing better value for the sale of AEA Technology, not just in the narrow sense of seeking and getting the best available price, but in terms of privatising the business on the basis that best enables it to exploit the opportunities that are open to it and maximise its contribution to the national economy.

Therefore, my hon. Friend will not be surprised to hear that I cannot accept the amendments because I do not believe them to be consistent with that wider public interest or in the best interests of AEA Technology and its staff.

**Mr. Maclennan:** The Minister seems to be making a perfectly extraordinary proposition that the House of Commons, in reaching a decision on the deliberations on the scheme prepared by the Government, is not capable

*[Mr. Maclennan]*

of taking into account exactly the same considerations that Ministers will have to examine. Why should he consider that the House cannot bear in mind what is in the commercial interest of the organisation and what is in the national interest?

4.45 pm

**Mr. Page:** I was on exactly that point and I shall explain.

First, it is entirely possible and normal that a transfer scheme would not be made until the point of sale. In such circumstances, the direction to the authority to draft a transfer scheme would of necessity be extremely detailed and might well include the name of and information relating to the proposed purchaser or purchasers.

There is a real danger that potential purchasers—whether they are financial institutions backing a sale to management and employees or trade purchasers—would be deterred from bidding if they knew that their bids would be subject to close parliamentary scrutiny even before the formal preparation of any sale had started. Even if bidders were not deterred, it might be possible to explain a preference for one bidder over another only by revealing information that the bidder might not be prepared to disclose for good commercial reasons. Equally, it might not be in the interests of the taxpayer to disclose details of competing bids as that may cause the lead bidder to reduce the value of his offer or back out of the purchase.

**Dr. Moonie:** The Minister appears to have failed to understand exactly what the amendment means. The whole point is for the Atomic Energy Authority to examine all the possibilities, and when it has decided its line of approach to the sell-off, and only that, to seek the approval of Parliament. It is nonsense to suggest that that would inhibit it in any way.

The Minister of State said on Second Reading that he would prefer the authority to be sold off as one organisation. Every observer has expressed a preference for the organisation to be sold to the management and work force. If that option turns out to be possible, there is no question but that it is the preferable option for sale and it could easily be subjected to scrutiny by the House. It is wrong to suggest otherwise.

**Mr. Page:** We cantered over those subjects in Committee and nothing much has changed today.

I return to the point that I was making. In addition, the amendment would inevitably delay the sale process and that in itself could cause a sale to fall through or reduce proceeds.

In respect of amendment No. 10, I am hurt by the implication that the Secretary of State would contemplate acting in anything other than the national interest. I am also somewhat puzzled that Opposition Members should imply by the amendment that they would be content for the Secretary of State to act against the national interest so long as he made only one scheme.

I assure the House that, when we consider the future of AEA Technology, all the Government's decisions will be driven by their concern to promote the national interest, to ensure that particular needs and requirements of Government customers are met and to maximise AEA Technology's contribution to the national economy.

**Dr. Moonie:** If the Government intend to act in the national interest, why are they withdrawing the national interest provisions in the Bill?

**Mr. Page:** We are looking at the national interest as regards the definition that I gave at the beginning of the debate. We are aiming to achieve not only the best price, but the best future for AEA Technology. The name of the game is to combine those two objectives harmoniously.

Let me refer briefly to the form of privatisation. Much has been made of what my right hon. Friend the Minister for Industry and Energy told the House on Second Reading. He made a powerful speech and I support what he said, but there is no ambiguity in what is happening. He did not say that there would be only one method of privatisation. In respect of the form and method of privatisation, he told the House that we attach a great deal of importance to the views of AEA Technology's management and staff. They know the business and their commitment is crucial to realising its full potential. They have made it clear that the best way forward for AEA Technology is for it to be privatised as a single whole.

I have taken note of the desire of my hon. Friend the Member for Wantage and others. It is a desire with which I fully sympathise—to see the business kept together.

The Government have already made it clear that for the time being AEA Technology will continue to be managed as a single, integrated whole, focused on the goal of building an increasingly competitive and successful international business. On the assumption that the Bill reaches Third Reading, I will mention some of the successes that AEA Technology has already enjoyed. A sale in that form may be the way of achieving our objectives and ensuring successful privatisation. Realistically, it is probably the only basis on which the business can be offered in the medium term, given the inevitable dislocation and uncertainty that a break-up would involve. However, I cannot say now—I cannot say definitely—that it will be sold as a single whole or that the sale will take any particular form. Those matters must depend on AEA Technology's performance over the next few months, the requirements of customers and market confirmation that a unitary sale would secure best overall value for money for the taxpayer.

In the light of my remarks, I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Wantage will withdraw his amendment and that Opposition Members will not press theirs.

*Question put,* That the amendment be made:—

*The House divided:* Ayes 229, Noes 266.

**Division No. 142]** **[4.50 pm**

**AYES**

| | |
|---|---|
| Abbott, Ms Diane | Barron, Kevin |
| Ainger, Nick | Battle, John |
| Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)* | Bayley, Hugh |
| Alton, David | Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret |
| Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)* | Beith, Rt Hon A J |
| Armstrong, Hilary | Bell, Stuart |
| Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy | Bermingham, Gerald |
| Ashton, Joe | Berry, Roger |
| Austin-Walker, John | Blair, Rt Hon Tony |
| Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)* | Bradley, Keith |
| Barnes, Harry | Bray, Dr Jeremy |

Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D N
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Church, Judith
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Corbett, Robin
Corston, Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley North)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll & Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Great Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon Alfred *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon John *(Aberavon)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Mike *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
Olner, Bill
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pearson, Ian
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Roche, Mrs Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Touhig, Don
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

**Tellers for the Ayes:**
**Mr. Peter Mandelson and Mr. Joe Benton.**

**NOES**

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(North Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M *(Brigg & C'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs Angela
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ru'cliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Congdon, David
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'lre)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Rt Hon Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Elletson, Harold
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Rt Hon Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward

Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Grant, Sir A *(SW Cambs)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archibald
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Rt Hon Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Sir Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Sir Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(NW Hants)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Needham, Rt Hon Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

**Tellers for the Noes:**
**Mr. Timothy Wood and**
**Mr. Derek Conway.**

*Question accordingly negatived.*

## Schedule 2

SUCCESSOR COMPANIES

**Dr. Moonie:** I beg to move amendment No. 11, in page 16, line 7, at end insert—

'(7) The Secretary of State shall seek to ensure that any disposal of securities issued to him under sub-paragraph (1) above shall be in such a manner as to prevent more than one half of those securities passing to any person or persons who, in the opinion of the Secretary of State, are wholly based outside the United Kingdom.'.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** With this, it will be convenient to discuss also the following amendments: No. 12, in page 16, line 7, at end insert—

'(7) The Secretary of State shall not dispose of more than one half of the securities issued to him under sub-paragraph (1) above until a period of three years has elapsed from the date of their initial allotment.'.

No. 13, in clause 7, page 4, leave out lines 11 to 16.

No. 14, in page 4, line 17, at end insert—

'(3) The Authority shall not dispose of more than one half of the securities issued to it under paragraph 1(2) of Schedule 2 to this Act until a period of three years has elapsed from the date of their initial allotment.'.

No. 15, in page 4, line 17, at end insert—

'(3) The Authority shall seek to ensure that any disposal of securities issued to it under paragraph 1(2) of Schedule 2 to this Act shall be in such a manner as to prevent more than one half of those securities passing to any person or persons who, in the opinion of the Authority, are wholly based outside the United Kingdom.'.

**Dr. Moonie:** Amendment No. 13 returns to a principle that we have already discussed: an insistence that the national interest remain a consideration before any disposal. Amendments Nos. 14 and 15 are consequential.

The amendments have three purposes. Nos. 12 and 14 provide in effect for golden shares, time-limited to the first three years of operation of any new company. The idea of an indefinite 50 per cent. shareholding by the Government was tabled in Committee and discussed at great length, but in the debate the Minister offered no opinion on the merit of that idea and concentrated on another amendment. We did not get the opportunity to discuss the golden share properly—hence our attempt to redress the balance this afternoon.

A provision such as this would help to secure the best deal for the work force and management who may wish to be involved in a buy-out. Golden share provisions have been included in a number of other privatisations carried out by the Government, so there is nothing particularly contentious in what we are trying to do. I say that this would

be in the interests of a management-workers buy-out because, if the Government retained 50 per cent. of the value of the company, the management and work force would not have to put up the full capital sum to purchase the company in the first instance. The extra three years that we are allowing would give them a bit more time to raise the capital that they might need to complete their purchase of AEA Technology from the Atomic Energy Authority.

I suggest that it would be well worth the Government's considering this motion. They must, like us, be interested in securing the best deal. To ensure that the morale of management and staff remains high, it is greatly in the Government's interest that the management and work force should be successful in any attempt at a buy-out. The golden share provision will also ensure that any predator company will be prevented from taking over AEA Technology, at least in the early stages of its life in the private sector. That will ensure that it has the best chance of surviving once it is moved to the private sector.

Amendments Nos. 11 and 15, on the other hand, would prevent the sale of the Atomic Energy Authority to companies or other bodies based outside the United Kingdom. The Opposition fervently believe that there are still considerable questions of national interest relating to the work of the AEA that are being overlooked by the Government in the present scheme. We seek some reassurances that the Government are aware that the national interest is involved and that they intend to ensure that it is properly managed and taken into account in any sale.

It is worth noting that the AEA has recently divested itself, outside the provisions of the Bill, of its facilities services division, which employs no fewer than 950 staff, to Procord Ltd., a wholly owned subsidiary of Johnson Controls Inc., of Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

I have already discussed the national interest clause. I do not propose to speak any longer on amendment No. 13 but I trust that the Government will provide us with some assurances on the amendments and I hope that we will not have to press the amendment to a Division.

**Mr. Page:** The amendments attempt to restrict the freedom of the Secretary of State and the authority to dispose of securities in AEA Technology after vesting. I would like to explain what I consider to be one or two of the practical effects of the amendments.

Amendments Nos. 11 and 15 raise the substantive issue of foreign ownership. I will deal with that in a moment, but let me deal first with the much less substantive amendments, Nos. 12, 13 and 14. They seek to restrict the sale of securities in successor companies to less than 50 per cent. within three years of vesting. Their purpose is transparent and doomed to disappointment.

Opposition Members tabled an amendment in Committee with the aim of delaying privatisation. That amendment attempted to hold up the proceedings for 12 months. I remember teasing the hon. Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie) that he was seeking to make the privatisation of AEA Technology part of an integrated Labour party policy. He assured me, no doubt in jest, that had he sought to delay the sale until a Labour Government were elected, he would have erred on the safe side and made it two years rather than one. I see that his confidence is starting to ebb away and that he now seeks to delay the sale by some three years, to be absolutely certain, as he thinks. That is not going to be long enough for him to succeed in his purpose.

Amendment No. 13 attempts to restrict the freedom of the Secretary of State and the authority to dispose of securities in a successor company by deleting clause 7(1). That clause expressly disapplies certain conditions of the Atomic Energy (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1981 in relation to the sale of shares in any successor company. It also prohibits the authority from disposing of any securities in a successor company except with the consent of the Secretary of State and the Treasury. It is purely an avoidance of doubt provision and its removal would not serve any useful purpose.

5.15 pm

**Dr. Moonie:** Is the Minister embarrassed to say that the content of that clause is the national interest provision; if not, would he like to put it on record that it is the Government's intention with this provision to delete national interest from the Bill?

**Mr. Page:** The hon. Gentleman did not act in such a crude and unsubtle fashion during all the time we were in Committee. He had a gentleness that commended itself to me, but the sort of approach that he adopts today will not obtain the response for which he hopes. Obviously, in everything that the Government do, the national interest must be there. I believe that the word is "paramount".

Clause 7(1) is necessary because, if not expressly disapplied, it is possible that the restrictions in the 1981 Act will be viewed as limiting the powers of sale under the Bill.

Amendments Nos. 11 and 15 are an attempt to prevent foreign ownership or control of AEA Technology. There is nothing between us on that. We have made it perfectly clear that the Government will act in the national interest in making decisions about the form and method of any privatisation.

I recognise the concerns that have led to the amendments being tabled. We all agree that AEA Technology is a valuable and important national asset and that, in deciding its future, we must aim to maximise its returns to the United Kingdom.

Let me set out two general points in responding to the amendments. First, the Government welcome overseas investment. If Opposition Members would care to come to hear me winding up the debate tomorrow night, they will hear me say how much we appreciate the huge investments that have been made in this country by companies that have provided jobs, exports and, I think, a valuable injection of new ideas and technology. However, that is for tomorrow night and, having given that trailer of what is to come, I am sure that hon. Members will not be going canvassing for the local elections in their constituencies but will stay here to contribute to that important debate.

Although we welcome such investment, potential buyers of privatised companies, or shareholders in them, must meet all the criteria that are attached to sales. There is no reason why they should be discouraged simply on the ground of nationality.

Secondly, the scope for restrictions and controls is strictly limited by European Union rules and other international obligations.

*[Mr. Page]*

In the case of AEA Technology, as I have already said, the Government's thinking is driven by our concern to ensure that the particular needs of Government customers are met and to maximise AEA Technology's contribution to the national economy.

The House can rest assured that all appropriate action to that end will be taken. A special share would be a possible line of approach, but I shall not speculate on that any further at present. It would be wrong to restrict ourselves in the way that the amendments seek. Statutory limitation as to when and to whom a successor company might or might not be sold would not be in the best interests of the taxpayer or the business.

I ask the hon. Member for Kirkcaldy to withdraw the amendment.

**Mr. Maclennan:** In view of the judicial decision of the House of Lords on interpretation of ambiguities by reference to Ministers' speeches, I think that it would be helpful to know whether the Minister is saying that, although the Government are deleting the words that deal with national interest, he believes that those words will still be imported into the construction of the Bill. If it is simply a tidying-up operation to the effect that it is no longer necessary to import the language that was used in the Atomic Energy (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1981 because it is implicit, it will avoid a great deal of doubt and be very helpful.

However, I suspect that the Minister is really saying that the Government's action is quite deliberate. He is taking the provision out because a Government decision that is not put before the House in a form that hon. Members might have an opportunity to consider will not be so readily challenged by judicial review if he has taken the words out. I think that that is a most unattractive and sinister development, especially as it has not been made explicit. It has been implied that nothing is changing. The reality is that significant change in the law is being imported into the Bill. That is a very powerful reason for suspecting that the Government are up to no good.

**Mr. Ken Purchase** (Wolverhampton, North-East): Clause 7 is a result of the hurried and unthinking way in which the Government have introduced the Bill. It is widely understood that the value of AEA Technology is based on its intellectual capital. The questions of securities within the company and of ownership should have been dealt with comprehensively and in a way that ensured that the ownership and direction of the company were wholly in the interests of the United Kingdom. The possibility of the company offering services overseas is another matter. Its control, its central direction and its understanding of its task should have been implicit in the Bill.

In Committee, I mentioned the possibility of a hybrid formation for the company which would ensure that it remained wholly and properly controlled within this country so that it could carry out the purposes for which it was set up in the first place and its increasingly important role of supervising the disposal of waste and the decommissioning of plant. I suggested that a hybrid formation might be an appropriate way to proceed. Such a hybrid should be based on the company's shares being wholly in the hands of the people who work in the company. I also suggested that there should be a form of supervisory board whose clear duty would be to ensure that at all times, the national interest was protected and served by the new company. Such a hybrid would meet all the concerns expressed by Conservative Members.

The Minister has said that he shares our concerns and that he believes that the national interest will be protected because the Government always act in the interests of this country. That is fine. We will not dwell on the Government's record and their understanding of what is in the national interest. That is a debate for another time which you would not welcome now, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

If we had a hybrid formation in which the company was owned by the people who worked in it, it would be a recognition that the value of the company was almost wholly based on the intellectual capital in it and on the ability of the workers to deliver the service that was wanted. Such a formation would ensure, through the supervisory board mechanism, that the company always acted in the interests of the nation and that it served the nation as was originally intended.

In the disposal of the company, it should have been implicit that it could be disposed of only with the encumbrance of a supervisory board with the duties that I have described. In that way, we could, in perpetuity, have ensured some consensus between the two parties. As it is, we know that the privatisation of the company is being used as nothing more than a substitute for the fact that the Government were unable to introduce a Bill to privatise the Post Office. As a result, this Bill has been hurried and it will not serve us as it should do. At the very least, the Government should consider our amendments.

**Dr. Moonie:** Let me get this clear. The Minister is not prepared to accept our amendments on retention of a certain proportion of ownership, but he is sympathetic towards the idea that the Government should prevent disposal in the wrong way. I suppose that one has to accept the Minister's good will, so I shall try to do so. He is not prepared to introduce a provision to prevent foreign ownership of the company, but he is prepared to say that the Government would consider the prevention of such ownership. He is certainly not prepared to own up to the fact that the Government intend to delete the provision on national interest. He is quite prepared to talk about clause 7, but he has not said exactly what is being deleted—the national interest as a condition of sale. Nor is he prepared to justify the deletion, because he knows only too well that there is no justification.

It may be more appropriate to attempt to amend the Bill in another place, so I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

*Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.*

*Amendments made:* No. 6, in page 17, line 7, leave out from second 'the' to 'in' in line 8 and insert

'statements of account prepared by the Authority under section 4(3) of the Atomic Energy Authority Act 1954'.

No. 7, in page 18, line 2, after 'accounting', insert 'reference'.

No. 8, in page 18, line 25, leave out from 'be)' to first 'the' in line 27 and insert

'amount determined by or under the transfer scheme or (if there is no such determination)'.

No. 9, in page 18, line 28, leave out from first 'the' to 'in' and insert

'statements of account prepared by the Authority under section 4(3) of the Atomic Energy Authority Act 1954'.—*[Mr. Page.]*

**Schedule 4**

PENSIONS

**Dr. Moonie:** I beg to move amendment No. 16, in page 30, line 22, after 'transfer scheme', insert

'or other transfer of an undertaking'.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** With this, it will be convenient to discuss also the following amendments: No. 19, in page 30, line 50, after 'transfer scheme', insert

'or transfer of an undertaking'.

No. 20, in page 31, line 13, after 'transfer schemes', insert 'or transfers of undertakings'.

No. 21, in page 31, line 13, at end insert—

'(7) This paragraph shall have effect for transfers of undertakings other than by transfer scheme, that occur on or after 1 March 1995.'.

**Dr. Moonie:** We now come to the first of two groups of amendments on the pension rights of employees within AEA Technology. In fact, the first group of amendments concerns employees who are no longer employees of AEA Technology. The amendments would allow some rights of pension transfer for people in other parts of AEA that have already been sold off, in particular the services division. While we were debating the Bill in Committee, the services division was sold off to Procord without the employees being given the pension guarantees included in the Bill for the scientific employees of AEA Technology.

We should be clear what the distinction means. The largely manual work force who make up the facilities services division—the support services—have been sold off into the private sector without the pension guarantees given to the professional and scientific staff who will largely be involved in selling off AEA Technology. I consider that the distinction is disgraceful. Amendment No. 16 would restore—it is retrospective—to members of the facilities services division and others the rights that have been given to the employees of AEA Technology.

**Mr. Maclennan:** I support the amendment. I have a substantial number of constituents at Dounreay, employed formerly by the facilities services division, but now by Procord. It is extremely unsatisfactory that their pension rights were not preserved by the Government when the transfer was made by UKAEA. If it is necessary to legislate for this purpose, it is open to the Government to do so through the Bill. I hope that they will remedy the defect even now. It is not satisfactory to make such changes without due and proper consultation and consideration of those affected. Those who have been consulted about the transfer of responsibilities have expressed, from the beginning, the strongest opposition to what is proposed. Their complaints are entirely justified and I hope that Parliament will now remedy the wrong that has been done to them.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I call Mr. Mitchell.

**Mr. Miller:** I worry when that mistake is made from time to time.

**Mr. Timothy Wood** (Lord Commissioner to the Treasury): So you should.

**Mr. Miller:** I understand the hon. Gentleman's words.

The amendments would give equal pension rights to employees who are divested, as my hon. Friend the Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie) has just explained. He has already cited examples to explain why there should be an element of retrospection. In Committee, some reference was made to the Atomic Energy (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1981. At that time, in the context of the disposal of Harwell—I mean Amersham International; I am not trying to give the Minister ideas—the Government said that they accepted that the employees of Radiochemical Centre Ltd. should remain in the Atomic Energy Authority pension scheme. We were told in Committee—repeatedly—that that was the point at which the Government changed their position, and all subsequent privatisations were dealt with in the way that is before us today.

I wonder whether the Minister has accidentally misled us, because there is a contradiction. In Committee, during the consideration of the Atomic Weapons Establishment Bill, the then Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement, the hon. Member for Lincoln (Sir K. Carlisle), when pressed on the question of pensions in that particular case, said:

"The amendments relate to guaranteed terms and conditions . . . including redundancy and pension provisions, and to the payment of redundancy money on transfer to the contractor. I have already given repeated assurances during the passage of the Bill that arrangements will be set up that provide benefits at least as good as those that staff presently enjoy."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee F*, 14 February 1991; c. 216.]

5.30 pm

Let us assume that the word "staff" could mean singular or plural. On 24 April 1991, the Minister was very specific. He said:

"No one will be made to suffer detriment to their pension arrangements as a result of contractorisation."—[*Official Report*, 24 April 1991; Vol. 189, c. 1108.]

What we have here, as I tried to illustrate in Committee, is an exercise that can potentially, and will actuarily, present disadvantage to some individuals.

The Minister was gracious enough, at the end of the Committee's sittings, to comment on people who were terminally ill, and I am grateful for that, but there are still answers that must be given. I am even more concerned when I look at our exchanges in relation to the Government Actuary. On 27 March this year, the Government Actuary's Department, in a letter to the central staff side, made it clear that

"Comparability assessments have been commissioned in the context of a compulsory transfer of employment requiring a specific group of employees to cease to be members of the UKAEA Schemes, but providing them with the opportunity to join their new employer's scheme."

Again, there is a contradiction. In Committee, the Minister repeatedly stressed the independence of the Government Actuary. On 4 April this year, the Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Energy said:

"The role of the GAD is crucial. It has a well-proven record of independence and it will decide whether there is a fair balance of benefit."

Later, in response to a question that I raised, he said:

"The definitions are from the Government Actuary."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee D*, 4 April 1995; c. 123-24.]

It seems to me that the independence of the GAD is being put in jeopardy, because it is clear from the text of the letter to which I have referred that the GAD was asked to act under specific circumstances, to provide a briefing for the Government under the terms that they have dictated as being the best mechanism for the disposal of this particular

*[Mr. Miller]*

business. It was not asked to examine and compare the benefits to the individuals or the collective population in the context of the various ways in which the pension scheme could be dealt with. The text of the letter is quite specific. The GAD was not even asked to look at the option of the benefit to individual employees if the earlier options that were available in 1981 were brought into play.

It seems to me that we clearly have evidence of interference by the Treasury in the manipulation of the pension arrangements around the point of sale. There is no clear logical basis in pension terms for the way in which the Government have reached their conclusions. Labour Members are seeking to make the best of a bad job by building in some protection in the amendments for the people who have already been disposed of, so to speak, in the context of the subsidiary to which my hon. Friend the Member for Kirkcaldy referred, and to build in the maximum protection within the disappointingly limited framework that the Government have provided us.

**Mr. Page:** As the House knows, the Bill is primarily designed to permit the privatisation of AEA Technology and it creates a successor company, or companies, by transfer scheme prior to the point of sale or the transfer of assets directly to the private sector.

The amendments that have been tabled by the Opposition have been presented as a model of reasonableness, but we had all of those methods in Committee. I would like to think that we dealt with them adequately, but, obviously Opposition Members have been driven by forces beyond their control to come again to the House and give it another run. I have no objection to that. I must tell the House, however, that the amendments would add a completely new dimension to the Bill by bringing within its scope any divestment, however, small, which the authority, for example, AEA Technology or the Government division, might wish to make in the normal course of business. Just to put the cap on it, the amendments would not just encompass future divestments but would go back to those that have taken place since 1 March this year.

We have to keep some form of proportion, because, with the exception of the facilities services division, the transfers involve a small number of employees. We have already had the debate on whether a company such as AEA Technology should worry about how the support systems should be run and whether that should be a separate operation. The authority has had wide experience of such transfers and existing law does provide adequate protection for employees. The amendments would mean that a panoply of provision designed for a specific purpose—the major transfer of AEA Technology—would come into play for a divestment which may, in fact, be just one employee.

Amendment No. 21 is slightly curious. I think that I understand what the hon. Gentleman is trying to do. He is trying to open the basis on which recent sales by the authority, particularly the sale of the FSD, have taken place.

**Mr. Miller:** The problem is that the Government are looking at the global interest. The whole structure of pensions is about how within that global picture one protects the best interests of the individual who is a member of that collective scheme. The Minister, by his own admission, is prepared to isolate an individual. It might be that individual who needs the greatest protection from the scheme. It seems to me that the Government are standing on their heads some of the ideas that they have promoted in terms of the importance of occupational pensions.

**Mr. Page:** As I suspected, if the hon. Gentleman had restrained himself for a moment I would have come to that point.

Amendment No. 21 endeavours to reopen the basis of the recent sales by the authority, in particular the facilities services division. The amendment is defective, but is no less important because of that. It seeks to impose a duty to do something in relation to an event that is already taking place. Even if the amendment were not obviously defective, it would be wrong in principle. Purchasers have bought the divested operations in good faith and it would be wrong to try, retrospectively, to change the basis on which the transaction took place.

I wonder whether Opposition Members have consulted not just the unions but the employees, because I am not certain that the employees would be pleased with what they are advocating today. In the case of the facilities services division, I know that the unions, in all their circumstances, recommended the transfer to Procord to their members. The new pension schemes include some significant improvements in benefit.

I thought that hon. Members raised genuine and valid concerns in Committee and I believe that the way in which I reacted to those concerns showed that I acknowledge what was said. In Committee, we debated the death-in-service benefit and it is much better than under the authority's scheme. I have a long list—

**Mr. Miller** *rose—*

**Mr. Page:** Hang on. The hon. Gentleman should not get so excited.

I have a long list of the various benefits offered by the UKAEA scheme and the scheme offered by Procord. For example, on pension benefits, the UKAEA scheme offers one eightieth for every year of service. The FSD scheme—Procord—offers one sixtieth for every year of service. There is one difference in inflation protection. Under UKAEA there is full inflation proofing and under the Procord scheme protection is guaranteed up to 5 per cent., with provision for discretionary increases beyond 5 per cent. Contribution levels depend on whether the person is industrial or non-industrial. There is a flat rate of 5.75 per cent. for Procord. Under UKAEA it is 7.5 per cent. in the case of the principal non-industrial superannuation scheme category and 5.75 per cent. in the industrial superannuation scheme category. The UKAEA staff under PNISS are talking about an extra 2 per cent. in their contribution levels. The Procord death-in-service lump sum benefit is three times the salary while the UKAEA benefit is twice the salary. Under the Procord scheme, benefits are payable to spouses or, at the discretion of the trustees, to other dependants. There is service enhancement to normal retirement age.

The general benefit is so much greater and I understand why the unions recommended full transfer.

**Dr. Moonie:** Just for the record, may I say that the Minister is misquoting us to some extent? We are interested in preserving choice for individuals, not for pension companies or pension schemes. We are trying to

ensure that the Bill allows an individual, not the company making up the scheme, to decide whether to stay in the old scheme or to move to the new one.

**Mr. Page:** I understand that, but at the moment those people in the UKAEA scheme are staying in that scheme. I do not feel that it is necessary to provide that sort of choice. When people move out of the UKAEA scheme, they move into the next scheme. I want to make it clear to the House that the scheme to which they will move is very good. The assessment of relative benefits shows that the Procord scheme is superior.

When divesting activities, including those recent examples, the authority has ensured, and will continue to ensure, that employees are able to join a pension scheme that is broadly comparable. It means that, as a whole, the mix of the benefits will have broadly the same value as in the authority's scheme. Employees will not lose out. There can be no question of there being a scheme that is not broadly comparable, otherwise employees may have grounds for constructive dismissal.

In each case, the schemes are certified by the Government Actuary as being broadly comparable. The Government Actuary is independent and I believe that his integrity is beyond question. I know that we have gone over this matter in Committee, but I believe that the Government Actuary is well recognised for his independence of thought. He reaches his conclusions only after careful consideration of all the features, including entitlement under the schemes being compared. Therefore, employees can have every confidence that their interests are being looked after. I urge the House to reject the amendments.

5.45 pm

**Dr. Moonie:** Just for the record, I want to make it clear that we are not questioning the integrity of the Government Actuary's Department. We are raising some questions about competence. We are not questioning the integrity of Procord, the company that bought the facilities services division. We are questioning the competence of the decision that transferred pensioners from the AEA to Procord without leaving them the choice of remaining in the previous scheme.

I do not intend to pursue this matter to a Division and I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

*Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.*

**Dr. Moonie:** I beg to move amendment No. 17, in page 30, line 35, leave out '(taken as a whole)'.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** With this, it will be convenient to discuss the following amendments: No. 18, in page 30, line 36, leave out 'other benefits' and insert

'entitlements to injury benefits and redundancy benefits'.

No. 22, in page 31, line 26, leave out '(taken as a whole)'.

No. 23, in page 31, line 27, leave out 'other benefits' and insert

'entitlements to injury benefits and redundancy benefits'.

**Dr. Moonie:** During the previous debate we strayed into the subjects covered by these amendments. I suppose that was inevitable. I congratulate the staff of the House and Madam Speaker on their exceptional generosity in providing us with a chance for two debates on pensions. There was a clear division between them in my mind when I started the first debate, but it is much less clear now having concluded that debate.

The amendments deal with the comparability of the AEA pension scheme and any future pension scheme provided by a new company. At present the Bill considers comparability to include all employment benefits, not just pensions. That is not considered to be acceptable by staff trade unions. For the benefit of the Minister who appears to be hard of hearing, I shall repeat that it is not considered acceptable by staff trade unions.

In Committee it was argued that the present AEA scheme includes injury and redundancy benefits and that they could not be reproduced in any new scheme for tax reasons. Our amendments return to the issue more precisely and, I hope, avoid that problem. We are doing our best to be helpful to the Minister.

We are not questioning the integrity of anybody involved in this process. We are questioning the competence of the decisions that have been made and we are giving the Government a chance to make amends for what we consider to be a mistake in the Bill's drafting. It will enable them to improve the Bill to the benefit of individual employees. We are trying to achieve full choice for individual members. They should be able to choose which pension scheme is most advantageous for them, depending on their circumstances. The Government are, ostensibly, in favour of choice and I can see no reason for them to reject these amendments.

**Mr. Miller:** I shall be brief because I made some of my intended comments during the previous debate. The amendments seek to deal with comparability between the AEA scheme and any future scheme provided by a new company. At present, the Bill considers comparability to include all employment benefits, not just the pensions. That is not acceptable. In the Government's infamous booklet, "The Government's Guide to Market Testing", there is a peculiar clause on pensions, including injury benefits. It says:

"Civil servants whose jobs transfer under TUPE cannot continue to belong to the PCSPS. Their accrued pension rights are fully protected by social security legislation and they have the option of preserving them in the PCSPS for payment at age 60 (provided they have two or more years qualifying service), or transferring them to the new employer's pension scheme or to a personal pension arrangement. In the latter two cases a transfer value will be paid by PCSPS."

The paragraph starts by referring to pensions, including industrial injury benefits, but that is then conveniently omitted. This is where we get into complications.

The Government Actuary's Department letter, to which I referred earlier, makes it clear that some individuals may be disadvantaged. That is the effect of this sort of block transfer into a scheme. The Minister set out, dare I say, a lucid argument—I might incur the wrath of my hon. Friends for saying that—as to why the services division scheme is better. He should refer to the Government Actuary's letter before he jumps to that conclusion. One of the problems with making such a comparison actuarially is that, in this life, people do not get more than they pay for, unless the Minister has invented some sort of perpetual motion machine in his visits to the AEA.

The letter says:

"The purpose of the GAD assessment is to ensure that, for the group of staff who are affected, the new pension scheme offers a package which is broadly speaking no worse in value than that which they presently enjoy."

*[Mr. Miller]*

The method of measuring that value is by calculating the sum total of all the benefits. Of course, they can be up or down on the comparable figures in different schemes. The Government Actuary continues:

> "This is not to say that some individuals may not be better or worse off in certain circumstances but that, overall, there is no significant detriment to any identifiable individual or group of individuals within the body of staff being transferred."

Broadly speaking, the Minister is presenting an accurate picture. The problem comes back to the fact that the Government Actuary cannot give him a guarantee that no individual will be worse off.

Against that background, in any sale or transfer, whether it affects the provisions of the Bill or, indeed, the sale of one private sector company to another, protection must be brought down to the lowest common denominator: the interests of the individual. No hon. Member can predict the individual needs of people in such circumstances. If a company is sold, there needs at the very least to be a period of grace, during which people can determine whether, in their own personal interest, they should transfer into the new scheme.

That is precisely what the Government did in 1981 in relation to the Amersham sale. It made a lot of sense then. In Committee, the Minister made clear, and was right to say, that the majority of people in Amersham have transferred into the new scheme, first, because starters have no choice—they can join only the new scheme—but, secondly, because a part of the population would actuarially be advantaged by such a move at particular times in their lives. Inevitably, therefore, over time the problem that the Government perceive in presenting employees with that option will be phased out.

Sometimes, in some of the subsidiary operations of the industry under discussion, we are talking about a half life of thousands of years, but the transition from the pension position that existed in 1981 to the one that the Government seem to be satisfied with in relation to Amersham today, took a handful of years. The Government should not worry about that.

If the Government are serious when they say, as we hear from time to time, that the Conservative party is the party of choice and of freedom of the individual, let us see them act on that and revert to the provisions that existed in 1981. Such clauses would therefore not be necessary because individuals would determine whether, against all the risks that exist in their place of work, their family circumstances, and their own personal health, they could make a judgment based on the best available professional advice as to what scheme they should be in and when they should transfer. If the Government are serious about the Conservative party being a party of choice, let us see them deliver on the amendment.

**Mr. Page:** I start by agreeing with the hon. Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie) that the two blocks of amendments have in many ways blurred and merged, but a fairly fine line existed between the two and, if his side will, I plead guilty to merging them. The amendments continue the debate that took place in Committee. Opposition Members are trying with considerable ingenuity to tie down a new employer to provide a pension scheme that, as a minimum, provides benefits that mirror those in the authority scheme. I understand the point made by the hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Mr. Miller) but I cannot accept his argument or that the amendment can be translated into the Bill.

Every privatisation is different and the pension provisions have been tailored to the particular circumstances that apply. We have designed the pension provisions that we believe to be the most appropriate to this privatisation.

In the case of AEA Technology, under our proposals, employees transferring who participate in an authority scheme will be given access to another pension scheme—either a new or existing scheme—operated by their new employer. The Bill provides the protection that, taken as a whole, it must be no less favourable than the authority scheme. Employee representatives must be consulted before the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry or the authority can be satisfied that a new scheme meets those requirements.

The new scheme must offer benefits that are at least equivalent to the authority scheme, although the benefit mix may be different. The Secretary of State or the authority would ask the Government Actuary to verify that the new scheme meets the requirements of the schedule.

I repeat what I said in Committee; the Government Actuary is impartial, has wide experience of these matters, and his opinion has been taken as authoritative on many such previous occasions. The proposed amendments would restrict the ability of the vendor to decide that a new scheme is comparable when the provisions of the scheme are taken as a whole. They would effectively require each benefit to be as good as the present one. As I have said, the new employer would be hamstrung into providing a pension scheme whose benefits, as a minimum, mirror the authority scheme. That would be unduly restrictive and could work against the interests of employees.

Let us take one example. *[Interruption.]* May I move on a little before the hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston returns to his arguments, which he has advanced on more than one occasion? Let us take the example of a new employer whose pension scheme is superior to the authority scheme but has a different mix of benefits. One or more of those benefits, which in the overall scheme may be minor, may be less favourable than the comparable benefit in the authority scheme. Agreeing to the amendments would prevent that scheme from meeting the terms of the legislation.

When similar amendments were discussed in Committee, I noted that they may have meant that new pension schemes could not be tax exempt. I am afraid that the current amendments suffer from a similar problem. In Committee, I gave two examples of benefits that prevented the authority scheme from being tax exempt. The hon. Member for Kirkcaldy has reflected those in amendments Nos. 18 and 23. Removing injury and redundancy benefits would not mean that the scheme would be tax exempt. Those are only some examples of benefits in the authority scheme that would prevent schemes from attaining tax-exempt status. Employees would not thank the Labour party for preventing their pension scheme from being tax-exempt. It would mean paying tax on their own and on their employer's contributions on their lump sums. People would not thank the Opposition for preventing the overall mix of benefits from being rearranged so as to increase them.

The hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston seemed to start from the basis that the authority schemes are the best things since sliced bread and that everything else is completely and utterly inferior. I am glad to say that there was a shift of view in Committee. Some 90 per cent. of the Amersham employees who remained in the authority's scheme have now transferred to Amersham's scheme. In that case the mix of benefit was very different from that in the authority's scheme. I shall not waste time by reading through the benefits of the Amersham scheme compared with the authority's scheme. However, if I had to make a choice of pension scheme I should choose the Amersham scheme.

6 pm

**Mr. Miller:** The Minister puts great store on the Government Actuary's words and accepts them as accurate. Does he accept the sentence which reads:

"That is not to say that some individuals may not be better or worse off"?

Does he not realise that we are discussing the interests of individuals?

**Mr. Page:** I understand that; the hon. Gentleman has made the point on more than one occasion. We are debating the transfer of group schemes. At this stage I cannot say what terms an employer may wish to propose, but whatever happens the overall terms must be no less favourable. Before coming to a view about that, employees' representatives would have to be consulted and I have no doubt that at that time they would make their views well and truly known.

The Bill as it stands represents the right approach and I hope that the hon. Member for Kirkcaldy will withdraw his amendment.

**Dr. Moonie:** It is clear that we shall not manage to persuade the Minister about the merits of our case and I do not propose to go on flogging a dead horse. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

*Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.*

*Order for Third Reading read.*

6.2 pm

**Mr. Page:** I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

I shall start on a note of discord. I have been called many things in my life, but being called a dead horse is hurtful and wounding. I hope that when the hon. Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie) responds to the debate, he will have the grace to withdraw that remark.

**Dr. Moonie:** My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) will respond to the debate. I was of course referring to the issue and not to the unfortunate Minister.

**Mr. Page:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for that clarification.

We had our disagreements in Committee and in the House, but we have had a useful discussion on the substance of the Bill and have clarified many issues. I pay tribute to the Opposition's constructive attitude. By and large, they did not set out to wreck the Bill, but tabled amendments that were designed to probe the thinking behind it and procure further information about the Government's intentions. Time will tell whether that is symptomatic of new Labour. Labour Members may have an immediate chance to test the new thinking that is sweeping through the Labour movement by not opposing Third Reading. I like to think that I have striven to encourage the process of conversion that is creeping across to the Opposition.

I have not been able to accept any Opposition amendments, but in my humble way I hope that I have provided clarification where it was necessary and given a number of assurances on key issues in the privatisation process. In particular, I have made it clear that the sale will involve only the commercial activities of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority. The Bill specifically prohibits the transfer of nuclear site licences and freehold interests in land that is subject to such licences.

UKAEA Government division will retain ownership of the authority's nuclear sites as well as responsibility for the safe management of the authority's nuclear liabilities and nuclear facilities, such as the fuel reprocessing plants at Dounreay, which still have operational life in them. It will also retain responsibility for fusion research, for the constabulary and for the authority's other non-commercial activities. I have made it clear that when AEA Technology operates nuclear facilities or works with special nuclear material, the highest possible safety standards will apply and existing security and regulatory requirements will be maintained.

Given the recognition that the future success of AEA Technology depends on its employees—I think that the House is united on that—I have given assurances that I would be prepared to consider seriously any bids from management and employees. Whatever the form and method of sale, I shall look to achieve substantial employee participation. The profile of AEA Technology is such that without its staff, it has little future. Therefore, I want to do everything possible to encourage the staff to feel committed to making AEA Technology grow in the international marketplace.

For the same reason, I have made it absolutely clear that the Government have no intention whatever of selling employees short. Their terms and conditions and pension rights will be fully protected. I think that the Opposition and I agree about the future of AEA Technology. We want to see it grow, thrive and prosper and, more importantly, we want it to achieve its full potential and contribute to the United Kingdom economy. The only difference between us is that I still do not believe in the conversion that is allegedly taking place within the Labour party. Labour believes that such achievements can be brought about in some shape or form in the public sector. But I believe that AEA Technology can be successful only in the private sector. Its privatisation will add to Britain's international competitive position in the scientific and engineering services market and strengthen our international reputation for scientific excellence.

AEA Technology has come a long way in a remarkably short time. It is becoming more focused both in terms of what it does and in serving the specific needs of its customers. It recognises the many economic opportunities that are available to it and is organising itself to exploit them. Even in the few short weeks that have elapsed between Second Reading and today, AEA Technology has won a multi-million pound contract from British Telecom for recycling the tritium from the old trimphone dials for medical purposes such as in cancer research. It has won

*[Mr. Page]*

contracts worth £6 million for supplying offshore services, and has won a new three-year contract worth £16 million to supply scientific services to Nirex. There will be many more such successes, but it will be able to take full advantage of the opportunities that will be open to it if it has the freedom and flexibility that I know that the private sector can supply.

Privatisation encourages efficiency and improves competitiveness. Companies flourish when they are removed from state control. They perform better and respond better to their customers. We believe that privatisation is the only way forward and that it is the best way forward for the business and the staff. I commend the Bill to the House.

6.8 pm

**Mr. John Battle** (Leeds, West): After all our deliberations in Committee and in the House, the Bill simply gives the Secretary of State outline permission to privatise AEA Technology, to do with it whatever he wants on his own terms. As the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) plainly spelt out, it gives him power without having to rely on a vote in the House.

Despite our questions on Second Reading and in Committee, we are still left without an answer to that great unknown question: how exactly do the Government envisage the privatisation of AEA Technology? We are left absolutely unclear about the form of the sale. The problem is that, as always, the devil is in the detail. We are entitled to ask—indeed, we insist on asking, even at this late stage—whether privatisation will be en bloc; will the authority be sold as a single entity?

I got a hint from the Minister, when he was put under pressure on Report, that the Government were changing the position and leaving the sale rather more open than was suggested on Second Reading. The Under-Secretary's instincts are that the authority should be sold as a single entity, but he then falls behind the phrase that it ought to be left to the market—the ultimate mantra of this Government; their classic refrain. We say that that is not good enough. The Government ought to play a positive role.

All the evidence suggests that it is unlikely that AEA Technology will be bought lock, stock and barrel. The only alternative is a piecemeal, stripping-out, cherry-picking exercise, during which the best bits will be sold off, leaving vital gaps in research. Current research will not be continued as a result of the Bill. In future, vital expertise and experience will be lost. The Government look to privatisation to bring in better services and lower prices. In this case, privatisation of AEA Technology will simply lead to the breaking up of a critical mass of scientific expertise, which is vital to the United Kingdom's scientific research and development and, indeed, its scientific contribution internationally.

It is important to emphasise that we are still to this day waiting for the Government's promised nuclear review. It has been promised since November 1989, when a Government statement announced a moratorium on the construction of further nuclear power stations up to 1994, when, we were told, the Government would review the situation. We are now in May 1995 and we are still awaiting the results of that review. All that has squeaked out are the Government's intentions to privatise Nuclear Electric and Scottish Nuclear Ltd. Coincidentally, the staff of Scottish Nuclear Ltd. lobbied the House—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. On Third Reading, the hon. Gentleman really cannot discuss matters outside the province of the Bill.

**Mr. Battle:** I accept your ruling of course, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but it seems rather surprising to be discussing the privatisation of AEA Technology operations when we are waiting for a nuclear review. I simply make the point, as Labour Members have said throughout the passage of the Bill—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. Life is full of surprises.

**Mr. Battle:** Clearly, it is the Government's intention not to put the Bill in the broader context of an energy policy, as referred to in the scientific foresight report that they commissioned into the future of energy. Even in that report, surprise was expressed at the Government ploughing ahead with privatising such operations of UKAEA.

UKAEA was formed in 1954 with a wide remit to advance a whole range of nuclear technologies. In 1965, UKAEA was empowered by the Science and Technology Act to undertake research on non-nuclear topics. The result has been a successful business. At present, the forecast turnover for the whole of UKAEA in 1994-95 is £370 million. AEA Technology's contribution is about £250 million and its profits in 1994 were £10 million. AEA Technology services to private sector industries increased by 37 per cent. to £92 million, compared with £67 million in 1993-94. The Minister referred to the contracts that AEA Technology has recently won to supply BT, and the winning of £6 million worth of offshore services.

If AEA Technology is so successful, why on earth have the Government introduced a Bill that will set in train the dismantling of a successful British and international business? Indeed, the business is expanding, with offices in America, the Netherlands and Belgium. It is established in eastern Europe, providing assistance in decommissioning and cleaning up nuclear power stations. Its expertise is recognised and purchased worldwide. AEA Technology has a highly skilled work force. Recent research at Oxford, commissioned by the Economic and Social Research Council, emphasised the importance of retaining key scientific and engineering staff as a contribution to a composite scientific effort. Why, if it is so successful, smash it up and sell it off in bits? The Bill is preparing the way for that to happen.

Spin-off technologies for industry outside the nuclear arena have been developed within AEA Technology directly as a result of that scientific interaction across a wide range of engineering and scientific disciplines. That has led to the transfer of non-destructive testing skills to the oil, gas and aerospace industries, to the application of fluid dynamics modelling to the oil and gas sectors and to the setting up of the heat transfer and fluid flow service; an international research development club with some 250 members worldwide and an annual turnover of £3 million.

AEA Technology has set up the National Centre for Tribology, which handles £3 million worth annually of industrial problem-solving in areas concerned with

friction, lubrication and wear. In addition, clean-up technologies have been developed to world-class levels of expertise.

The expertise of AEA Technology is precisely what the Office of Science and Technology energy foresight report recommended should be supported and enhanced. That report—the Government's scientific inquiry—was published in the past few weeks. Yet the Bill could lead to an irrevocable loss of scientific and engineering expertise, which the UK ought to be maintaining and enhancing, not dismantling.

Despite the debate on Second Reading and the questions that we asked during the weeks in which the Committee sat, it is fair to say that a whole range of issues are still outstanding. For example, questions on managing the safe decommissioning of nuclear liabilities and the custody and maintenance of radiation dose records have not been answered. The nuclear installations inspectorate recently expressed concern about the safety implications of fragmentation. The inspectorate warned that it would want assurances that Scottish Nuclear Ltd. would have access—timely indeed—to the wider body of technical information residing with Nuclear Electric and the Atomic Energy Authority. Yet with the break-up of UKAEA and the dispersal of its nuclear expertise, how on earth can the Government assure us on those questions?

We have also asked questions about medical supervision of employees in subsidiary companies. As my hon. Friend the Member for Kirkcaldy (Dr. Moonie) said on Report, the whole question about national interest relating to the work of AEA Technology, if parts are sold abroad, is still outstanding. Our questions were not satisfactorily answered when we moved amendments on Report. Already we have heard that the facilities service division is moving abroad because American companies have bought it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Mr. Miller) asked again about pension rights of employees whose departments are to be sold off or transferred. Those rights have not been guaranteed. Our amendments for equal pension rights for employees were voted against. All that we have been given are vague assurances. Those caught up in transfer have no legislative cover whatever under the Bill. Their rights ought to have been included in a Bill of this nature—they are not. It is disappointing perhaps, but not surprising that the Government regularly vote against all our reasonable amendments. They are perhaps just making a crude attempt to protect the new power to be given to the Secretary of State to be able to privatise industry.

All AEA Technology's achievements have been built on maintaining an integrated business. AEA acknowledges that its commercial success derives from the capability to consider process, plant and environmental matters in relation to each other. That has been its dynamic and the engine behind the success of the whole enterprise.

As privatisation erects artificial barriers between commercial and non-commercial activities, key synergies will be jeopardised and lost. AEA Technology will work best if it remains intact. As a smaller dismantled organisation, it will lose precisely what is considered its major trading asset—the synergy of its component parts.

Breaking up AEA Technology by privatising it will not allow its combined skills, expertise and knowledge to be directed to exploring the best and safest methods of decommissioning nuclear power stations. As usual, the Government's priority is to get the cheapest, quickest short-term deal. In this case, that will prejudice a whole area of valuable United Kingdom scientific research.

We should maintain an integrated research facility rather than atomising it, especially when the Government have thrown the whole future of the nuclear energy industry up in the air. Parliament should decide the precise form of the sale. That is why we must oppose the Bill. The Bill leaves far too much unsaid; it is a "Leave it to me," or rather, a "Leave it to the Secretary of State" Bill, which will simply create more uncertainty and insecurity for everyone involved. It is a dismantling Bill that does not deserve a Third Reading. Hon. Members should vote against it.

6.20 pm

**Mr. Miller:** On Third Reading I shall not re-run the pensions argument; I simply tell the Minister that whatever skills he may have—I realise that he must have some, as he has found himself on the Government Front Bench—they are not those of a pensions actuary. I urge him to revisit some of the arguments advanced during the debate, because it is clear that he has failed to recognise that the building of a pensions scheme is about how to protect the best interests of individuals within a collective arrangement. The suggested scheme fails to do that.

I asked the Minister earlier what the core business of the enterprise was. He failed to understand that. My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) has just listed some of the extraordinarily diverse scientific skills that exist in the enterprise, and the dispersal of those elements into a fragmented group of companies will work to the disadvantage of British science.

It is crucial that if it is to be sold off at all the science base should be dealt with as one entity. I can do no more than urge the Government again to consider the greater good of British science, and to acknowledge the fact that the operation can continue to deliver the enormous contribution that it has made over the years to an extremely diverse group of scientific disciplines only if it is kept together.

I shall not stray into the subject of the nuclear review, but I am deeply concerned about our failure during the proceedings on the Bill to get answers from the Government about the relationship between the parts of the Atomic Energy Authority that overlap with the Berkeley technology centre, which is part of Nuclear Electric. Because of the uncertainty about the Government's intentions—one day the railways are top of their list, the next day it is the nuclear industry—it is difficult to assess where AEA will fit in and what the interplay with Berkeley will be in the future structure of the company. Again, the Government would be wise at least to defer any action until the outcome of the nuclear review is known and has been debated in this place.

The final question is: what benefit will there be for the taxpayer? We do not yet know. There is no obvious financial gain, although I suppose that there is a long-term gain for the public sector borrowing requirement in the disposal of the long-term pension liabilities. However, we do not even know how much will be gained there. There is at least a possibility that the Government's overall financial gain will be extremely small. We have not yet

*[Mr. Miller]*

been told how much money is likely to be transferred for the contingent liabilities of the pension fund, and we could find ourselves making no money at all from the sale.

The taxpayer's interests have not been taken into account, nor have those of British science, and the interests of the employees have certainly not been taken into account. Yet the Government say that it is perfectly okay to give the Secretary of State all the responsibility without his having to come back to the House with any detailed measures stemming from the Bill. We have a most unsatisfactory measure before us and I cannot do other than concur with my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West in opposing it.

6.26 pm

**Mr. Purchase:** My hon. Friend the Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Mr. Miller) asked what benefit there would be for the nation. The answer is that the Government do not know, for they have made no assessment—no benefit, no cost, no analysis. They have simply brought here a Bill which, as my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle) said, is a loosely worded piece of paper designed to do nothing more than to dismantle a company which has served Britain well.

That company was formed under an earlier and wiser Conservative Administration, and it is now being dismantled by a completely foolish Administration. There is a story about virgins and lamps, and it applies to the present Government compared with the earlier Government who had the wisdom and foresight to understand the importance of the nuclear industry, how it needed to be regulated and how it would serve the needs of this country for many years. Now all that is to be lost.

To understand the way in which the Government have brought the Bill to the House, we need look no further than the politics of the past 15 years. The measure is a simple crude privatisation of an industry for which they have no further use or purpose, for they are not the slightest bit interested in the future of British technology or science. They believe implicitly that the market will sort it all out.

That is crazy and inappropriate, and the loose structure of the Bill is positively dangerous. There may be a case for all-encompassing clauses in certain circumstances, when what we are dealing with is certain and can be seen and understood, but it is in the nature of scientific endeavour that one cannot call the shots for the future. Yet we are being asked to give the Secretary of State all the power to determine what form the future ownership of the company will take, and how it might be transferred, with securities and shares, in the future.

The Bill before us is not one that we can gladly embrace, and it should be voted down.

Let us look at some previous privatisations and draw a comparison with what the Government are doing in this instance. Following almost every privatisation, we have seen boardroom share options blossoming and people ripping off public funds like there was no tomorrow. Those involved have ensured that their back pockets are filled, and it will be no different following this privatisation.

The Minister has said that he will ensure that there is the full and proper participation of the employees. I shall believe that when it happens. The Government's purpose is simple. They know that the value of the company is low, at around £200 million. If this privatisation follows the pattern of others, the company will be massively undervalued and in a short time will be trading at a much higher price.

That is the history of all of the privatisations, and the history of the Government's uncaring and silly attitude towards our national assets. In the Government's opinion, it is always better for a company to be in the private sector rather than the public sector, but this is unquestionably an exception that we ought to be looking at much more carefully than we are.

Let us consider the matter of ownership, and how it could have been better structured if more thought had been given to the company. The Government ought to have thought as Ernest Bader did at Scott Bader in the 1950s. He determined that the company that he owned would be given to the workers in trust. In so doing, he ensured that the company would continue to grow and succeed and that it would remain in the ownership of the people in that company. He believed implicitly that labour should employ capital, not the other way round.

Here is another opportunity in which the real value of a company is the intellectual capital on which it has been built. Here was a golden opportunity for the Government to privatise, if they must, but to do so in such a way that the interests of Britain were served for as long as we could see into the future. The Government claim that companies cannot grow in the public sector because of Treasury rules, but they could change those rules. The Post Office has shown that the Government can help provide for a successful business by dealing in a different way with such matters. The Government need not be hamstrung by Treasury rules, which they can change. It is within the gift of the Government so to do. But they have done as they always do and disposed of the company.

In the area of scientific endeavour and monitoring, we can be sure that the Government will say that it is nothing to do with them if anything goes wrong. They will say that it is a private company, and it is not their responsibility. The Government take their hand off everything that they ought to have their hand upon.

**Mr. Page:** I hope that the hon. Gentleman will make reference to the fact that the nationalised companies which are now in the private sector were dipping their hands into the taxpayer's pockets to the tune of £50 million a week before privatisation. They are now contributing £50 million a week to the Exchequer.

**Mr. Purchase:** What an intervention to make at this stage of the debate. I tell you, the Government make no assessment whatever of the benefit of important companies to the British economy. All that they can see is the balance sheets and the share options. They never see the benefit of having companies within the public sector, providing vital services to industry to enable it to expand and improve the economy. It is always a matter of how to get a penny today and never mind what happens tomorrow. That is the truth. That is the Government's philosophy; it never changes and it never will.

On this occasion, we are dealing with a very dangerous subject—the proper supervision and monitoring of the development of nuclear technology in this country. I tell

you, when it goes wrong—I am sorry to say that it almost inevitably will—the Government wil be the first to say, "Don't blame us; it has nothing to do with us—it is for the private sector to determine how best to deal with these matters." That is not the way any Government should deal with these matters. I tell you—

**Mr. Barry Porter** (Wirral, South): Tell us.

**Mr. Purchase:** I can tell the hon. Gentleman a great deal.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse):** Order. I hesitate to intervene on the hon. Gentleman, but he keeps blaming me. This has nothing to do with me at all.

**Mr. Purchase:** You are quite right, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I unreservedly apologise. I am blaming the Government, of course, and not your good self.

The Government have presented us with an untenable measure and a Bill so loosely worded and structured that it can mean anything to anybody. The Bill in no way preserves the integrity of ownership that is necessary for the proper development, supervision and monitoring of the nuclear industry. It in no way attempts to make a proper financial appraisal or a cost-benefit analysis of what is good for this country and what is not.

The Government have made no effort to do that because the Bill has been brought to this House for the simple reason that they failed to convince the House and the country that the Post Office ought to be privatised. This Bill is a substitute. It is a failure, and we should vote against it.

*Question put,* That the Bill be now read the Third time:—

*The House divided*: Ayes 284, Noes 246.

**Division No. 143]** **[6.35 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(North Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs Angela
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ru'cliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Rt Hon Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Rt Hon Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Grant, Sir A *(SW Cambs)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archibald
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Rt Hon Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert B *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Sir Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Sir Peter *(Farnham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll & Bute)*
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(NW Hants)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Needham, Rt Hon Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim

Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Scott, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

**Tellers for the Ayes:**
**Mr. Simon Burns and**
**Mr. David Willetts.**

**NOES**

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A J
Bell, Stuart
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Rt Hon Tony
Boateng, Paul
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Cabom, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D N
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Church, Judith
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Forsythe, Clifford *(S Antrim)*
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley North)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hutton, John
Ilsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Sheffld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S
Kilfoyle, Peter
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Maddock, Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll & Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon Alfred *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon John *(Aberavon)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Mike *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
Olner, Bill
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pearson, Ian
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Roche, Mrs Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Chris *(Is'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger

Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Timms, Stephen
Tipping, Paddy
Touhig, Don
Turner, Dennis
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

**Tellers for the Noes:**
**Mr. Jon Owen Jones and**
**Mr. Stephen Byers.**

*Question accordingly agreed to.*

*Bill read the Third time, and passed.*

## STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

### Civil Aviation

*Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),*

That the draft Civil Aviation Authority (Borrowing Powers) Order 1995, which was laid before this House on 30th March, be approved.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

*Question agreed to.*

## EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

*Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (European Standing Committees),*

### Enlargement of the European Union

That this House takes note of the unnumbered Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on 13th December 1994, relating to the accession of new members to the European Union; and welcomes the fact that agreement was reached on these adjustments enabling Austria, Finland and Sweden to accede to the European Union on 1st January 1995.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

*Question agreed to.*

## Mrs. Donna Tutton

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

6.51 pm

**Mr. Allan Rogers** (Rhondda): It is with some reluctance that I bring this case to the attention of the House this evening. I do so only as a result of my complete inability to establish the facts in this case or, having established what facts I could, to obtain some action on the matter.

The best way for me to place the case in context is to read a letter that was sent to me by my constituent, Mrs. Donna Tutton, which I received on 1 November 1994. I shall paraphrase parts of it, but I read it substantially as it is, for accuracy.

Mrs. Tutton writes:

"On the 29th April 1990 I was attacked in my own Home by my ex-husband, his father and his brother-in-law, resulting in me having an operation at the Heath"

hospital in

"Cardiff. They had to shave my head, saw my skull open to remove blood clots"

and

"I had 36 staples in my skull. If they hadn't operated I would have been dead by morning.

I had repeated visits to the hospital by them to"

tell her that she and her baby son, who was 10 months old, would be killed and that the son would be sent to a country overseas and would be bled to death to cleanse his soul.

"I ended up having a nervous breakdown. The doctor was very good and thanks to her help I managed to report this to the police and they were arrested.

I was told they were let off as I was the only witness to the attack. I was told by them that they could kill me as I didn't count and no-one would believe me anyway, they knew someone in the"

Crown Prosecution Service.

"My solicitor wrote to the CPS. He was very shocked that they weren't being taken to court . . . the only reply we got was the decision was theirs and they didn't wish to discuss it . . .

Since all this happened I have"

had to move my home

"four times and my son has needed to move school three times. They've always found me. I have now re-married a boy from Porth"—

the village where I live in the Rhondda—

"and am now living"

in the Rhondda valleys, but

"they've found me again and we're going to have to sell up."

The letter describes some other matters, but Mrs. Tutton finishes as follows:

"Why are myself and my son being punished? We've never hurt anyone in our lives yet we're on the run.

It seems I don't count as I am just a silly girl. It's not what you do, it seems, it's who you know.

They could kill me and probably get away with it"

and no one would say anything.

"They'll just say it was a domestic.

Please, please could I come to talk with you?"

*[Mr. Allan Rogers]*

I was so distressed by the contents of that letter that I immediately wrote, on 1 November 1994, to the Crown Prosecution Service, although first I wrote to the police, asking them if they would immediately look after my constituent. I wrote:

"I would be grateful if you could do something so that my constituent can be protected from this harassment"—

because Mrs. Tutton told me that at the same time her assailants were coming to her home and standing outside it, because they wanted to take the son back to be brought up in their religion—

"especially in view of the previous vicious assault by these men, a Mr. Zahad Amin, a Mr. Ray Bashk and a Mr. Sherez Khan."

Finally, on 1 February 1995, I received a letter from the chief constable, saying:

"As you know, Mrs. Tutton's former husband, Mr. Zahad Amin, lives in the Cardiff area and she has seen him a number of times in the general area of her home and the local school and is understandably apprehensive about his motives. There is little that the police can do, but an officer has spoken to Mr. Amin and warned him about his future conduct. It may be in Mrs. Tutton's interest to seek legal advice about the possibility of taking out an injunction against her former husband, although I should mention here that the last sighting of Mr. Amin"

in the Ynyshir area was October 1994, which was when she wrote to me in such a distressed condition.

At the same time, I wrote to the Crown Prosecution Service, because I could not understand why that case had not proceeded. Then a farce started that would be funny if the context were not so tragic. I could not believe it. It was almost comic. When I wrote to the Director of Public Prosecutions—excuse me handling some documents, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I want to get it right for the record—and asked her whether she would

"reconsider prosecuting and inform me why you did not proceed in the first instance"

I received a letter in reply, after some time and a couple of reminders, saying:

"Mrs. Tutton, in April 1990, reported to the police that she had been assaulted by her ex-husband and his father. The police prepared a file and submitted it to the Crown Prosecution Service for advice, but on their test of what they would consider a reasonable prospect of conviction"—

I shall return to that issue later—

"they decided not to proceed."

The file did not pass the evidential test and it was sent back to the police. However, it was subsequently lost. The excuse offered then was: "We cannot give you any reasons for not prosecuting the case because we have lost the file; it is not available." The Director of Public Prosecutions said:

"Enquiries have been made with the police to see whether this file is still in existence. Regrettably, the police have not retained a copy of the papers. Without these papers, it would obviously be impossible for me to comment on the Crown Prosecution Service's decision, or to explain the reasons for taking no further action in this case.

I realise that my reply will be a disappointment to Mrs. Tutton".

That fairly gratuitous remark at the end of the letter did not please me.

I wrote back immediately and said:

"I must confess that I'm amazed and appalled at your reply which is summed up in your penultimate paragraph. You really must do better than this—I am not going to have my constituent's complaint brushed aside in this cavalier and high-handed way.

My constituent was savagely beaten, hospitalized with a fractured skull and yet you have taken no action. What on earth do you require as evidence? If Mrs. Tutton had been murdered"—

if her attackers had proceeded a little further and kicked her a little more she would have died—

"there would have been no witness so according to your criteria no-one would have been prosecuted.

I am enclosing some further documents which might stimulate a more intelligent response".

After a reasonable period—not immediately—I received another letter from the Crown Prosecution Service. I sent medical evidence in relation to Mrs. Tutton's case, together with her initial police statement. I received a letter from the CPS which stated:

"As I explained in my letter of 24 November 1994, papers relating to this matter have not been retained by the police or the Crown Prosecution Service".

The letter goes on to say that there was lack of corroborative evidence as there was only one witness.

It is a pathetic and a sinister reply, because only the skill of the surgeon saved Mrs. Tutton. If she had died, there would have been no witnesses and, according to the CPS criteria, no prosecution could have taken place.

I would like the Solicitor-General to examine that question. If the Crown Prosecution Service intends to apply those criteria in all cases, it would mean that there would never be a prosecution in a rape case. Most rapes are not committed in public; there are usually only two witnesses—the rapist and the victim of the rape. According to the criteria that the CPS has evolved in Mrs. Tutton's case, if there is only one witness there can be no corroborative evidence. Does that mean that justice is to be dispensed in this country only when there is a gaggle of witnesses? Will not forensic, circumstantial and other corroborative evidence be accumulated in order to prosecute cases?

The letter raises another equally appalling issue—I am sure that you will find it incredible, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As I said earlier, I submitted copies of Mrs. Tutton's original police statement and medical evidence to the CPS. The CPS letter states:

"Mrs. Tutton provides documents"—

it was I who provided them—

"confirming that she suffered injuries. However, these documents rely a great deal on what Mrs. Tutton told the medical practitioners and, in themselves, do not take matters any further".

That is an absolutely incredible and contemptuous statement, which is highly insulting to the neurosurgeon who wrote the medical report.

The neurosurgeon's letter states:

"Skull X-rays demonstrated a right parietal skull fracture and a CT scan demonstrated a right sided, extradural haematoma, ie a blood clot between the inner surface of the skull and the tough membrane (dura) which surrounds the brain. There was bruising around her left eye and right arm".

There is further evidence that Mrs. Tutton still suffers not only as a result of the nervous breakdown but also from epileptic fits.

The Crown Prosecution Service said that the documents that I submitted relied on what Mrs. Tutton had told the medical practitioners. Mr. Deputy Speaker, can you

imagine Mrs. Tutton walking into the hospital and saying, "Hiya fellas, I've got a right parietal skull fracture, a blood clot and bruising all over me. I've been battered against the wall, rammed against the door and kicked on the floor."? It is absolute nonsense to suggest that the documents rely on what Mrs. Tutton told the medical practitioners. Would a neurosurgeon write a report based on such evidence? The facts are there for all to see.

I have tried to pursue the case through every avenue. The Home Secretary said, "It has nothing to do with me." When I went to the ombudsman on the basis that the case had been administered badly, he said, "It has nothing to do with me; I can't deal with matters of justice." My hon. Friend the shadow Attorney-General suggested that the ombudsman for legal services might be able to help. However, he could not provide assistance, because he can deal only with complaints against solicitors, barristers and licensed conveyors. How do we deal with complaints against the Director of Public Prosecutions and her Department?

I did not want to bring the matter before the House; I did not want to expose the problems in an Adjournment debate. I have copies of the copious letters that I have sent to all sorts of Government Departments in an attempt to receive an answer and to resolve the matter through the normal channels. I wrote to the Lord Chancellor, the Home Secretary, the chief constable, the Director of Public Prosecutions and the ombudsman, but I came up against a brick wall.

What is the present position? I do not wish to be critical of the Solicitor-General. I genuinely want to elicit solutions to the problems that I have raised—if not for Mrs. Tutton's sake, for the benefit of others in the future. Will the Solicitor-General establish an inquiry into the matter? Will he promise this evening that he will examine the issue and give me an answer? Is there a precedent for the course of action to be taken when files are lost? I am sure that files must have been lost before—there are thousands of files circulating in the CPS and in police departments. Surely we can look to some form of precedent in this matter.

This raises a fundamental issue: what is the Crown Prosecution Service about? I accept that there must be some filtering of evidence before cases come to court. It used to be done primarily by chief superintendents who decided whether to process matters, probably in consultation with others, but it now appears that the Crown Prosecution Service is the judge and jury. A relatively young solicitor in the Crown Prosecution Service can take the evidence and decide that it will not go through, and that is that.

I thought that the basis of our law was that evidence could be presented to a court, and examined by a judge who would direct and consult a jury, who would then hand down a verdict. I know that all cases cannot go to court. They would clog up the whole system, but I would rather a system that is clogged than for such cases not to go before a court and be tested.

I feel that there is insufficient evidence to convince people. My argument against not going to court is that any woman in this country is vulnerable within her own home. It means that anyone can get away with viciously attacking his wife or children. There are very sinister overtones for such vulnerable people as old-age pensioners, a wife in the family home and people out on the streets who are the victims of crimes committed in dark and secret places. If there are no other witnesses and if one witness who is the victim is not enough, our society has taken a step backwards.

If the answer is that we cannot clog up the legal system by prosecuting any of those cases, I would prefer a clogged-up system. However, if the money is not available because the Government are not making resources available for the system of justice to be prosecuted properly, the Solicitor-General must say so. If the decisions are based on financial grounds, I believe that it is very sad.

I take no pleasure at all in coming here tonight and exposing one of my constituents to the glare of publicity. I was amazed at the response of the media to tonight's Adjournment debate. They came to me almost in droves today because they see some of the elements I have outlined. It gives me no pleasure to be here, but if the Solicitor-General can give answers, I shall be extremely grateful.

7.12 pm

**The Solicitor-General (Sir Derek Spencer):** Let me first congratulate the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) on obtaining the debate, which raises an important subject, not only for his constituent, but for the public at large. Although I have listened with sympathy and interest to the points that he has raised, I am afraid that I cannot adopt the epithets which he has used to describe the events surrounding Donna Tutton's case. It is not accepted that she has given an accurate account of the reasons why proceedings were not instituted, still less that anyone acted in a cavalier or high-handed manner; nor is there anything prophetic or sinister in how the case was handled. There are 1.4 million cases handled annually by the Crown Prosecution Service, and the case was handled in just the same way as all the others.

The debate gives me the opportunity first, to explain how the Crown Prosecution Service approaches the decision to prosecute—an issue which is frequently misunderstood and tends to be surrounded in myth and misconception. Secondly, I shall set out how that general approach was applied by professional lawyers to the case that the hon. Gentleman has raised.

**Mr. Rogers:** The Solicitor-General said that there were millions of cases. Are the files lost in all 1.4 million cases?

**The Solicitor-General:** No files were lost in this case, and if the hon. Gentleman will bide his time, I shall explain to him what happened.

The decision to prosecute an individual is a very serious step. Fair and effective prosecution is essential to the maintenance of law and order. No doubt all hon. Members will agree with that. In every case, the prosecution has serious implications for everybody involved—on one hand the victim, and on the other hand the witnesses.

Each case is normally started by the police. The first stage involves the police charging a suspect. The file is then sent to the Crown Prosecution Service, which applies the tests which are set out in the code for Crown prosecutors. About 50,000 copies of that were published a short time ago, in a plain English version and a plain Welsh version. They were circulated to other prosecuting authorities within the Crown Prosecution Service, to the police and to other law enforcement authorities.

*[The Solicitor-General]*

The first stage that the Crown Prosecution Service applies is what is called the evidential test. All cases must pass that to be considered as qualifying for prosecution. No matter how important or serious a case is, it must pass that evidential test before it can go any further. For a case to pass the test, the Crown prosecutor must be satisfied that there is enough evidence to provide a realistic prospect—not a reasonable prospect, as the hon. Gentleman said—of conviction against each defendant on each charge.

Those tests are applied by trained barristers and solicitors, upholding their professional standards. They must consider what the defence case may be, and how it is likely to affect the prosecution case.

A realistic prospect of conviction is an objective test. It means, as it says in the code, that a jury or bench of magistrates, properly directed in accordance with the law, is more likely than not to convict the defendant of the charge alleged. That is the test that applies, and on reflection the hon. Gentleman may agree that it is a fair test.

To put a rhetorical question, what is the point of conducting litigation involving the liberty of the subject on a "wait and see" basis, by saying, "Let us wait and see if the magistrates find there is a case to answer," or, "Let us wait and see if the judge thinks there is a case to answer."? That surely would be unfair to the suspect, the victims and the public.

It is quite wrong to regard the function carried out by Crown Prosecution Service lawyers as acting as judge and jury. That is not their function. As I have said, their function is to ascertain whether there is a realistic prospect of conviction.

In no case is that decision based on financial considerations. The lawyer who takes the decision has no idea what the state of the branch budget is. Whether it has spent a little or a lot is of no concern to the lawyer taking the decision. It cannot be stated too often that financial considerations do not enter into the decision.

The first stage is reached when the police charge the suspect in the custody suite at the police station. If the hon. Gentleman has not been to his local police station to see that procedure, I invite him to do so, because it illustrates the pressures to which the police are subject—noise, interference, drunks, hysterical witnesses and so on. Against that background, the custody officer must make a decision, on the evidence known to him, as to the appropriate charge.

**Mr. Rogers:** A member of my family is a policeman, so of course I have visited the local nick on more than one occasion. I accept that policemen are subject to stress. Perhaps the Solicitor-General ought to know that I was a policeman while doing my Army service.

**The Solicitor-General:** In that case, my point is already made—but many people do not realise it, and the hon. Gentleman cannot blame me for taking advantage of the occasion to give wider publicity to that which the hon. Gentleman knows from personal experience.

The hon. Gentleman will realise that it is often necessary later to amend or add to the charge, or even on occasions to withdraw proceedings, for a number of reasons. The principal reason is that the police are not always in possession of the full facts when they initially charge the defendant.

The second stage is when the file arrives with the Crown Prosecution Service—the first time that the mind of the trained lawyer is brought to bear on the case. The police are not lawyers.

The hon. Gentleman took us back to the days when the local superintendent decided whether a case should be brought. If I may trade experience for experience, in my early days at the Bar, many were the occasions in Norfolk and Suffolk that I entered the court at quarter sessions or assizes briefed by just such police officers. I am as familiar with that procedure as the hon. Gentleman. As a result of the Philips royal commission, the House decided that that procedure was no longer satisfactory.

In the light of experience, and of a number of miscarriages of justice such as the Confait case, it was thought necessary to divide the investigative process and the prosecutorial process—to continue to vest the investigative process in the police, but to vest the prosecutorial process in a new body, the Crown Prosecution Service.

As I go around the country asking police officers of all ranks whether they want to return to the days when they fulfilled the prosecutorial function as well as the investigative one, precious few of them want to turn the clock back. Their view almost to a man and woman is: "Our job as police officers is to police, to prevent and detect crime, and to investigate. The job of prosecuting is properly that of the CPS."

By the time that the mind of the trained CPS lawyer is brought to bear on the case, the investigation will be either complete or well advanced. The charges preferred by the police may need to be amended, substituted, or in rare cases withdrawn. When it is decided to withdraw a prosecution by discontinuance, the invariable practice where possible—and it is in virtually all cases—is to consult the police and to ask for their views, then discontinue in the light of any additional submissions or evidence that the police may offer.

At that second stage, the evidence is closely examined by the CPS lawyer. Sometimes, it is suggested by uninformed persons that there is reluctance on the part of the CPS to prosecute. Why should there be? I do not know the supposed motivation, but that suggestion is absolute nonsense.

If the hon. Gentleman has not visited his local CPS branch, I invite him to do so. He will see how the lawyers deal with their work, and learn their attitudes. He will discover whether they are frightened of bringing prosecutions, as some people suggest, or whether—as is the fact—they apply their trained, professional and impartial judgment to the facts of the case before them.

**Mr. Rogers:** The Solicitor-General completely misunderstands. In spending his time trying to defend the indefensible, he does not grasp the nettle. The problem is not whether the CPS took the decision that it did rightly or wrongly. When I asked for its reasons, the CPS could not find the files. Mrs. Mills stated:

"If the original file of evidence had still been available, I would be able to give a detailed reply. However, I regret that without access to the original file of evidence supplied in 1990, I am unable to comment on the circumstances which lay behind the decision".

I am not necessarily questioning the CPS decision per se, although I have expressed my views. The Solicitor-General should have listened to the end of my speech, when I asked whether he could do something now.

**The Solicitor-General:** I listened to the beginning, middle and end of the hon. Gentleman's speech. I hope to answer all aspects of his questions before I finish.

I described the general process that is followed in all cases, so that it might be made plain and to draw any suggestions in various quarters that some sinister process is undergone by CPS lawyers, which is not so. They approach cases in the way that I have described. Their sole purpose is to ensure that the right defendants are brought before the courts, prosecuted fairly and punished on the basis of charges that accurately reflect the seriousness of the offending, and which enable the court to impose adequate punishment.

That is the generality. I come to the particular case that concerns the hon. Gentleman. I begin by briefly explaining the facts as they are now known. There is no dispute that, on 29 April 1990, Donna Tutton suffered a serious head injury. On 4 May, when admitted to East Glamorgan general hospital, she was found to be suffering from a fractured skull, with a blood clot immediately underneath the skull. She needed immediate surgery, and there is clear and incontrovertible evidence from medical men of standing that that was her condition.

Shortly afterwards, Donna Tutton made a complaint to the police, and provided them with a witness statement containing her account of the events of 29 April, in which she said that she had been attacked by a named man. However, shortly after making that initial statement, Mrs. Tutton made a further statement withdrawing her complaint. She told police that she no longer wanted to support any criminal proceedings. Accordingly, at that stage no proceedings were instituted.

There matters rested until October 1991. The complaint made in May 1990 was withdrawn. Nothing more happened for more than a year, until October 1991. At that time, the lady found herself prosecuted for a serious assault. She went back to the police and told them that she wished to pursue the case in respect of which she had made the complaint 18 months before. On 18 October 1991, some 18 months after being assaulted, she made a further witness statement, in which she gave an account of events on 29 April 1990 and named the person who she said was responsible for attacking her and causing her serious injuries.

The police arrested that person and interviewed him. He flatly denied being at the house at the time, and maintained on a number of occasions that he was completely innocent of the attack on Donna Tutton. He was nevertheless charged by the police and bailed to attend a magistrates court on 20 January 1992. On that day, the case was adjourned until 20 February for a committal to take place so that the proceedings might be transferred to the Crown court.

**Mr. Rogers** *rose—*

**The Solicitor-General:** I shall certainly give way, but I am just coming to what I see as the guts of the case: in the light of the foregoing, why did the case not proceed? I shall explain.

The evidence that the lawyer at the CPS had to consider at this stage had to be looked at against the criteria that I have outlined. Was there a realistic prospect of conviction; if so, was a prosecution in the public interest? As it was a serious matter, it boiled down to just the first question—was there a realistic prospect of conviction? There was no comedy or farce. This was a serious professional exercise, to be carried out by a professional person.

The main issue that the lawyer had to determine concerned whether there was a realistic prospect of convicting a named person of the admitted assault. There was plenty of evidence of the assault; the real issue was whether the named man could be proved to be the attacker.

As the hon. Gentleman has said, the evidence for the identity of the attacker was only Donna Tutton herself. That in itself is not fatal. The courts are concerned with the quality of evidence, not with the numbers of witnesses. All of us at the Bar have from time to time been involved in cases where the word of one witness has prevailed against that of many, because courts have determined, on all the evidence including the witness's demeanour, that he or she was telling the truth. The fact remained that Donna Tutton was the only witness, however.

Next, the lawyer had to take into account the fact that she made a complaint shortly after the original assault, which she then withdrew. Thirdly, about 18 months had passed since the original complaint, during which time she had been content for no proceedings to be initiated. Fourthly—and most importantly—the timing of her second complaint and any motive that she might have had that might have affected her credibility had to be considered—in particular, the possibility that she was making the complaint as a counter-allegation in response to an allegation against her of committing a serious crime. As a matter of common sense, that is a potent element undermining someone's credibility, which any rational person would have to take into account.

Weighing all these four matters in the balance, the Crown prosecutor concluded that the evidence did not afford a realistic prospect of conviction. In the light of that, the case could not proceed. But consistent with the proper procedure, the police were consulted and asked whether they wished to add anything or argue to the contrary. They agreed with the decision; accordingly, a notice of discontinuance was issued, and the proceedings were terminated.

There is absolutely no truth in the allegation that the case was not dealt with properly because any file was lost by the CPS. Any files that were lost were lost well after the event, as I shall go on to explain.

**Mr. Rogers:** I find the Solicitor-General's response appalling. He has given four reasons why he says the case did not proceed. I accept those reasons, but when I wrote to ask Mrs. Mills, the Director of Public Prosecutions, for reasons, she replied that she could not comment on the circumstances that lay behind the decision, because the file was not available. Is it not strange that the information has suddenly surfaced now? Certainly no one knew about it until tonight.

**The Solicitor-General:** I am not a conjuror: I am not going to pull a rabbit out of a hat. But I am going to be able to explain, if the hon. Gentleman will contain himself, how it is that, unlike the DPP, I can now explain the reasons. The hon. Gentleman can take credit; his

*[The Solicitor-General]*

persistence led to the coming to light of some further material. He has performed a signal service for his constituent by pursuing the matter.

The decision having been taken to terminate the case, matters remained there—until the hon. Gentleman wrote to the DPP on 1 November last year, enclosing his constituent's correspondence complaining about the decision. By then it was almost three years since the proceedings had been discontinued, and in order to deal with the issues raised by the hon. Gentleman, it was necessary to try to retrieve the file.

This is where the problem began. A member of staff spoke to Donna Tutton to find out more details of the case. As a result, the local office made a search of its records. The file was not there, for good reasons that will shortly become apparent. Because of the time that had elapsed since the proceedings were discontinued, in accordance with ordinary procedures for destroying files, the file had been destroyed.

The CPS wrote to the police asking whether they still had a file. At that stage, no information was received from the police, and despite a further request from the hon. Gentleman, no file could then be found—in the hands of the police or of the CPS. It was not until last week that the police, not the CPS, were able to locate in their archives a copy of part of the file. It was not complete, but it threw light on the reasons why the Crown Prosecution Service had originally discontinued the case.

**Mr. Rogers:** I am glad that the Solicitor-General is smiling; he must have a better sense of humour than I have. Was the copy found before or after I put in the request for this Adjournment debate?

**The Solicitor-General:** It was found only last week; I imagine that it was found after the hon. Gentleman's request. I am smiling because I have, I hope, an appreciation of a sense of theatre. This is the answer to the long search that the hon. Gentleman has made for the truth.

As I said, the copy is not complete, but it contains sufficient information for me to be able to provide now such detail as I have about the case and to reassure the hon. Gentleman that all relevant matters were properly taken into account by the Crown prosecutor when the decision was taken to discontinue the proceedings in February 1992.

I know that the hon. Gentleman is concerned that the original file in the hands of the CPS cannot be found, and that, necessarily, all possible information about the case is not available. I shall explain the procedures for retaining and destroying files, so that I can satisfy him that there has been no skulduggery in that area.

The CPS receives approximately 2 million files a year from the police. To store them indefinitely would obviously be a huge and unnecessary burden on taxpayers' funds. The retention of files even for a shorter period has a significant cost, and the CPS fulfils its statutory obligations to retain documents placed with it under the Public Records Acts of 1958 and 1967. This means that the minimum retention period for cases tried in a magistrates court is 12 months, and that the minimum retention period for cases tried in the Crown court is three years.

CPS files are not, of course, an official record of court proceedings. Files are retained only for as long as the department considers that they are required for its own purpose, unless they have a wider administrative, precedent, historical or research interest.

This means that, although a few files may be retained for long periods, or even permanently if they are of historical interest, in which case they are kept in the Public Record Office, the majority of files relating to the large number of cases received by the CPS are destroyed after a relatively short time. The CPS must balance the likely usefulness of files against the burden on the taxpayer of retaining large quantities of files containing material of little or no significant public interest.

In a case such as this, where proceedings were discontinued in the magistrates court, the local arrangements for the storage and retention of files were such that the destruction date for files relating to cases tried in the magistrates court was two years and one month, unless there was some good reason for keeping them longer.

Therefore, the CPS file in relation to this case would have been destroyed in March 1994, some two years and one month after the proceedings were discontinued. If the hon. Gentleman's inquiries had been made during that time, the CPS would have had the file to hand, and the DPP would have been able to refer to it and give him a full reply along the lines that I have given him. For the reasons I have described, she was, most unfortunately, unable to do so.

**Mr. Rogers:** I must confess that there are some differences between the replies given by the DPP and the Solicitor-General. He says that, if I had raised the case in March 1994, the file would have been available. Unfortunately for the Solicitor-General and for Mrs. Mills, she wrote me a letter on 24 November 1994 saying that, at the end of a retention period of one year, the papers were not destroyed by the CPS, but returned to the police. They were returned within a year, yet the Solicitor-General says that they were available four and a half years later. What is the truth of the matter?

**The Solicitor-General:** The truth is that more than one copy is retained. The police have their version, and the CPS has its version. The destruction procedures I have outlined relate to the copy kept by the CPS.

**Mr. Rogers:** With all due respect to the Solicitor-General, Mrs. Mills says in the same letter that the file is not in existence. She says that she cannot comment because she does not have a file. The Solicitor-General is now saying that there were two files.

**The Solicitor-General:** I have explained to the hon. Gentleman what the position is. I thought that I had made it crystal clear.

To complete the story, the hon. Gentleman wrote to the DPP on 1 November and on 7 December last year, although the enclosures to the second letter were not sent until 31 January. She replied on 24 November and 9 February, explaining that, as far as could be established at that time, the case involving Donna Tutton had been the subject of an advice file from the police to the CPS. Advice had been given to the police, and at the end of the file retention period, the papers were returned to the police, who unfortunately had not retained a copy. It is only now that the police have located a copy of the file that the true picture is known.

The hon. Gentleman began by pleading for an inquiry to be held. Such an inquiry as is called for by the case has now been held. I have explained in full detail to the hon. Gentleman what has occurred. I assure him that the CPS dealt with this case properly and carefully. I have explained that it has proper systems in place for the retention and storage of files.

I know that Donna Tutton unfortunately continues to suffer from her injuries. She recently received an award in her favour from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board. The only issue in front of that body was whether she had suffered injuries as a result of a criminal assault; there was no need to identify the attacker. There is therefore no inconsistency between an award of compensation from the board and the CPS declining to prosecute. I hope, however, that the award goes some way towards compensating Donna Tutton for her pain and suffering as a result of this unfortunate incident.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Adjourned accordingly at twelve minutes to Eight o'clock.*

# House of Commons

*Wednesday 3 May 1995*

*The House met at Ten o'clock*

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

## Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Wells.]*

10.4 am

**Mr. Llew Smith** (Blaenau Gwent): This year marks the 25th anniversary of the non-proliferation treaty, which was established to halt the spread of nuclear weapons and to find a way foward to complete nuclear disarmament.

This summer also sees the 50th anniversary of the explosion of two atomic bombs on Japan. On 6 August 1945, an atom bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, killing more than 140,000 people. Some three days later, another atom bomb was dropped on Nagasaki, killing more than 70,000 people. As someone said, in the central square mile of each one of those cities, nine out of 10 people died; and 90 per cent. of the dead were not soldiers or politicians: they were children, mothers and grey-haired old men and women.

The message that came from a recent anniversary of that bombing was, "Step back and learn from us." Those world leaders who are participating in the non-proliferation treaty conference in New York, which is now drawing to a close, have the opportunity to do just that—to step back and learn not just from that tragedy but from many other tragedies that have afflicted our people over the years.

When the British ambassador commended the non-proliferation treaty to the United Nations General Assembly in 1968, he said:

"I cannot prove the nuclear powers' sincerity. An act of faith rather than objective data is required. I accept that when they pledge themselves to pursue negotiations in good faith to end the nuclear arms race at an early date, they mean what they say."

The ambassador was summarising article VI of the non-proliferation treaty, which envisages a world free from the threat of nuclear weapons.

Some 27 years later, the United Nations Secretary-General, opening the non-proliferation treaty conference, said:

"The most safe, sure and swift way to deal with the threat of nuclear arms is to do away with them in every regard. This should be our vision of the future. No more testing. No more production. No more sales or transfers. Reduction and destruction of all nuclear weapons and the means to make them should be humanity's common cause."

How does the Government's present proliferation policy stand up against those two comments? For instance, in the debate on the Royal Navy in February this year, the Minister of State for Defence Procurement said:

"We all want to work for the reduction and the eventual abolition of nuclear weapons."

That filled me with some optimism, as it complied with article VI of the non-proliferation treaty. But that optimism was quickly dashed because, within seconds, the same Minister said:

"One of the main tenets of our policy is that we should retain our nuclear deterrent while any other country in a position to threaten our security possesses a nuclear weapon or the ability to construct a nuclear weapon."—[*Official Report*, 16 February 1995; Vol. 254, c. 1146.]

That obviously breaks article VI of the non-proliferation treaty.

Some statements, even from those on the Opposition Front Bench, fill me with dismay. Writing about the world's stock of nuclear weapons, the shadow Secretary of State for Defence said:

"Until the elimination of these stocks is achieved, Labour will retain Britain's nuclear capability."

Both the Government and the Opposition seem to be saying that Britain will be the last country to give up its nuclear weapons. That is in stark contrast to a decision taken at a recent Labour party conference that we, as a future Government, would, among other things, scrap Trident.

A month ago in Washington, the Prime Minister met President Clinton. The Prime Minister boasted about the continuing closeness of the Anglo-American relationship. He told one journalist:

"If you were to spend a weekend on one of our nuclear submarines, you would find a Trident missile on it. I'm not sure you could travel on anyone else's submarine and find a Trident missile on it".

He emphasised that that was a

"practical illustration of the extent of the closeness of the defence, security and other relationships between the United Kingdom and the United States".

That "practical illustration", however, is also a violation by both the UK and the United States of America of article I of the non-proliferation treaty, which states:

"Each nuclear weapons state, party to the treaty undertakes not to transfer to any recipients whatsoever, nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, or control over such weapons, or explosive devices, directly, or indirectly."

In a debate in December, my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Simpson) exposed the detailed way in which the British Trident programme was dependent on United States technical support and equipment. The purchase of Trident—those missiles that the Prime Minister referred to on British submarines—is certainly a transfer of a military weapon system.

The examples highlighted by my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, South and, indeed, the Prime Minister are both breaches of article I of the non-proliferation treaty. That is not just my opinion; it is the conclusion of countries such as Mexico, which has expressed that view at the conference that is going on in New York.

What is particularly disgraceful about the continued military co-operation between the United States and the UK is that those countries are two of the three depositary states for the non-proliferation treaty. In effect, the treaty is held in trust by them. How do they show that respect? By breaking the very first article of the treaty.

An argument exists that we should agree to an indefinite extension of the non-proliferation treaty. I am opposed to that, because it would remove any leverage by the non-nuclear powers to pressurise nuclear weapons powers to negotiate nuclear disarmament.

*[Mr. Llew Smith]*

As if being put in the diplomatic dock over US-UK nuclear collaboration were not enough, the Government have colluded to ensure that this country has also violated the second part of article I of the non-proliferation treaty, which reads:

"Each nuclear weapon state party to the treaty undertakes not in any way to assist, encourage, or induce, any non nuclear weapon state to manufacture, or otherwise acquire nuclear weapons, or other nuclear explosive devices, or control over such weapons or explosive devices".

Article II of the treaty goes on to establish a complementary commitment by the non-nuclear power states not to receive assistance in nuclear weapons manufacture, or otherwise to acquire nuclear weapons.

It is obviously true that Iraq violated its commitment under article II, as the UN special commission's investigation has made clear, but, according to David Kay, one of the team leaders, the role of British companies was vital to Iraq's efforts to enrich uranium for nuclear warheads. Dr. John Gordon, who was head of the nuclear energy department of the Foreign Office from 1986 to 1988—so one would expect him to know something about these matters—argued in a letter to *The Independent* on 21 November 1992 that the UK Government were complicit with Iraq in breaching article I.

For example, in February 1989, two years before the fighting in the gulf, the private secretary to the right hon. Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave), the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, who was then a junior Foreign Office Minister, wrote to then Foreign Secretary Geoffrey Howe's office, stating:

"you may wish to show the Secretary of State the attached papers concerning a potentially politically-sensitive export to Iraq. The machinery in question has legitimate civil uses, but could also be employed in munitions manufacture"—

here is the important and nuclear connection—

"or even in uranium enrichment. Mr. Waldegrave's inclination is to support the recommendation that applications are approved. He has commented that screwdrivers are also required to make hydrogen bombs."

**Mr. Paul Flynn** (Newport, West): Does my hon. Friend recall that, five months before the Gulf war, the then Foreign Secretary told me, in answer to a request to beef up inspections of the Iraqi nuclear programme, that Iraq was a signatory to the non-proliferation treaty? The Government told me that they had full confidence that Iraq would abide by its obligations and that it was not working to manufacture nuclear weapons. If the Gulf war had not taken place, Iraq would have had nuclear weapons by now.

**Mr. Alan Simpson** (Nottingham, South): Iraq would probably have had screwdrivers as well.

**Mr. Smith:** I have no doubt that, by now, Iraq would have had nuclear weapons and, in all probability, screwdrivers.

**Mr. Andrew Robathan** (Blaby): I am following the hon. Gentleman's argument with interest, but does not the intervention of the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) reveal the flaw in that argument? People can sign the treaty, but it would be foolish for to us abandon our weapons in a one-sided manner while people sign the treaty in less than good faith. The Government have said, "We would like to, and will, abandon our weapons, but only when everyone else does so at the same time." That is a sensible position. The one-sided argument always goes against the protection of our nation, and is bizarre.

**Mr. Smith:** We cannot continue to tell non-nuclear power states or non-nuclear weapons states that they should not have those weapons of war, if, at the same time, this country does not make any effort to negotiate away its own stock of nuclear weapons. That is an act of hypocrisy on our part. It would be an act of naivety on the part of the non-nuclear power states if they continued to accept such an argument.

**Mr. Robathan:** Surely it would be naive of us to say, "Look. We will give up all our weapons. Now, of course, the rest of world will do so." As the hon. Member for Newport, West rightly said, if we had not gone to war in Iraq, by now it would have nuclear weapons. Does the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) believe that Iraq would not use them?

**Mr. Smith:** We had nuclear weapons, but it did not seem to deter Iraq from going to war. I seem to remember one Mr. Gorbachev some years ago taking some important unilateral initiatives on nuclear disarmament, which had a positive effect throughout the world.

**Mr. Flynn:** The whole point of my intervention was to stress that the naivety was that of the British Government in the 1980s not beefing up inspection under the treaty. There is nothing wrong with the treaty, and countries such as France and China have engaged in disarmament, but the problem is that we need a treaty that is transparent.

**Mr. Smith:** By sheer coincidence, inspection was my next point. The shadow Foreign Secretary, writing in *New Statesman and Society*, argued for a much tougher regime to enforce compliance with the non-proliferation treaty through inspection at short notice of any nuclear installations, whether or not the state had admitted to their existence. He said that Iraq had got away with its nuclear weapons programme because safeguards were applied only to its officially declared facilities.

That is true, but it is not the full truth. If the major supplier states such as the United States, Germany and Switzerland had not turned a collective blind eye to the export of that equipment to Iraq, sometimes through a third country, intrusive inspections of the assembled equipment would be less of a problem or requirement. As the Scott inquiry has shown, some British Ministers even encouraged support for Iraq's nuclear programme.

In relation to the problem of sensitive technology exports, last week I received a comprehensive report entitled "Proliferation and Export Controls" by Saferworld, a foreign affairs think tank that is based in London. The report highlights huge discrepancies between controls imposed on sensitive or dual-use technology. It shows, for instance, that, of the 73 countries designated as "sensitive" for exports by Germany, Japan, the United States and the UK, only 30 appeared on all four countries' restricted list. If the Minister has read that report, will he please comment on those findings?

In New York, the Foreign Secretary announced that the United Kingdom had ceased production of fissile materials for explosive purposes. That decision is full of loopholes, the first of which is that, for nearly 20 years, the main feedstock for new British warheads has been recycled plutonium from dismantled warheads.

Does the Minister agree that the thremal oxide reprocessing plant—THORP—will add tens of thousands of kilograms of plutonium to the stockpile, which at Sellafield already amounts to 80,000 kg? Is not THORP's significant reprocessing capacity bound to add to the safeguards problem? Does the hon. Gentleman agree with an editorial in the *Financial Times*, which said:

"Efforts also need to be made to curb production of reactor grade plutonium, produced by plants such as THORP, since this can readily be converted into bombs, using modern technology"?

The second loophole in Britain's offer to halt military fissile material production results from the so-called tripartite agreement between Euratom and the International Atomic Energy Agency. For example, Parliament was told in 1983 that article XIV of the agreement allowed for the withdrawal of civil material from the safeguards for reasons of national security. In January 1994, I was told that the Government had activated that clause 571 times since May 1979, and that 70 of those withdrawals involved plutonium.

We also know, because of an admission by the American Government last June, that reactor grade plutonium has been tested in a nuclear weapon. Will the Minister block that loophole? Otherwise, THORP and Sellafield will remain a huge potential plutonium mine for the military.

The third loophole is provided by the recent extension for a further 10 years of the clauses of the 1958 mutual defence agreement on atomic energy, which allows the United States and the United Kingdom to barter explosive nuclear materials. That loophole allows each country to make up any perceived nuclear explosive material shortfall in the other, and unless it is closed it will undermine the non-proliferation goals of the cut-off convention.

An Indian defence expert said of the non-proliferation treaty:

"Ultimately it comes to a single issue. In today's world do we still need weapons of mass destruction? Should terror be the only way to achieve stability? Do we still need to divide countries on whether they possess destructive weapons and assign separate duties and responsibilities? Would such a division in perpetuity be in the interest of the world?"

Finally, I pay tribute to all the organisations, such as Greenpeace, the Acronym Consortium and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, that are still campaigning for a world free from the threat of nuclear weapons—especially CND, which is continuing the argument in connection with the present non-proliferation treaty conference.

Next week, on 10, 11 and 12 May, not many yards away from Parliament, Janet Bloomfield will fast for a nuclear-free world. I am sure that all hon. Friends and hon. Members will want to give Janet all the support possible, and then to join her and other members of CND in marching to the French embassy to protest against nuclear testing.

In my opinion, nuclear weapons constitute the most important issue that the House could consider. There is an obligation on each and every one of us to ensure that in the months and years ahead something positive comes out of the treaty, so that we can leave to our children a planet at least as beautiful and as safe as the one that we inherited.

10.24 am

**Mr. Andrew Robathan** (Blaby): The hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) spoke with integrity and honesty, which one can respect. He has honestly told us that he has not changed his views over the years; they remain the same as they were 20 years ago. I agree with what he said about wishing to pass on a planet and a country as beautiful and as nice to live in as they are now—indeed, I hope that they may be better.

However, the hon. Gentleman has totally missed the point. I did not intend to speak in the debate, but I am spurred to do so by his comments. At no stage did he mention the possibility that the defence of the United Kingdom might be important to its inhabitants. He never said that the odd threat and the odd danger existed beyond the shores of the United Kingdom, and that those threats might not respond to the logic and charm of his speech.

The defence of the United Kingdom is possibly the most important role of any Government of whatever political hue. The defence of the realm has always been stated to be the first business of Government.

The hon. Gentleman implies that, by possessing nuclear weapons, the United Kingdom poses a threat to world peace. History reveals that that is not true. Since we have had nuclear weapons—we have had them for nearly 50 years now—we have neither deployed them nor threatened to use them. We have kept them in the background; we have spoken softly but carried a big stick, which we could use if we were ever threatened.

**Mr. Llew Smith:** The hon. Gentleman talks about the possibility of using nuclear weapons. Would he be willing to press the button to start them off? If so, what would be the consequences, and what would be the possibility of leaving our children a safer world than the one that we inherited? Finally, at whom does he think those nuclear weapons would be pointed and fired?

**Mr. Robathan:** The hon. Gentleman may know that I spent 15 years in the British Army. During that time, my view was that, when nuclear weapons were used it would be time to pack up and go home, because that would be the end of it. The question of first use is interesting, and the Government have been right never to say, "We shall never use nuclear weapons first," because, if one does that, one gives away the whole purpose of having the weapons. Instead, we say, "We have nuclear weapons; I trust that nobody will wish to use them against us."

**Mr. Smith:** Would you press the button?

**Mr. Robathan:** I would not personally be willing to do that—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"]—but if I were a Minister I would not be in a position to say that, because Ministers must maintain a bland face and say, "We have nuclear weapons"—

**Mr. Smith:** Nuclear weapons are a deterrent only if the other side knows that one is willing to use them. The hon. Gentleman has just admitted that, if he were responsible, he would refuse to press the button, so nuclear weapons cannot be a deterrent. It is as simple as that.

**Mr. Robathan:** The hon. Gentleman is wrong. I did not say that I would not use nuclear weapons if I were responsible. I said that, personally, I would not use them at the moment. However, the Government must maintain a bland face and say, "We have nuclear weapons. They are there to be used if necessary." Of course the Government must say that. Otherwise, we might just as well not have nuclear weapons.

The Government have never used nuclear weapons, nor have they threatened to use them. Over the past 50 years, although it may have escaped the hon. Gentleman's notice,

*[Mr. Robathan]*

we have not been invaded, and we have lived in peace—an advantage that our parents, grandparents and even our great grandparents never enjoyed. Surely that points to some flaw in the hon. Gentleman's argument that nuclear weapons cause war and are a threat to peace. We have enjoyed peace partly because of nuclear deterrence.

**Mr. Simpson:** May I remind the hon. Gentleman that the debate is about the conference on the extension of the non-proliferation treaty, and the extent to which the world recognises that the proliferation of nuclear weapons is a threat to global stability? May I take him back to his experience in the armed forces, and ask him whether, in the multiplicity of civil and regional wars, of which he will have much closer knowledge than I, he can identify one context in which the United Kingdom's possession of nuclear weapons helped to deter or to end such wars?

**Mr. Robathan:** I am well aware that we are discussing the nuclear non-proliferation treaty—that is the point: we already possess nuclear weapons. Nobody would wish to see the spread of nuclear weapons—I am sure that the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent would agree with that. I wish to see them reduced.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether the United Kingdom's possession of nuclear weapons had ever prevented war in regional conflicts. We have not been involved in a war which might have needed nuclear weapons, or called for them to be used, because we have possessed them. It is self-evident—we did not come to blows with the former Soviet Union, despite its evangelical creed of pushing revolution and communism around the world.

The former Soviet Union says so. Documents from the former Soviet Union reveal how generals were planning to invade the west. They may have been lunatic generals, but they were generals in the former Soviet Union. Those plans were never put into effect, because we stood firm and did not say, "Of course we will not defend ourselves."

We had to have nuclear weapons then against a tangible threat. What is the threat now? The hon. Gentleman mentioned proliferation. The threat lies with countries such as Iraq, which the hon. Gentleman mentioned and which has been working for nuclear weapons for many years. I think that it was in 1980 that Israel bombed a nuclear plant in Iraq for that very reason.

We all wish to get rid of nuclear weapons. The Minister of State for Defence Procurement said:

> "We all want to work for the reduction and the eventual abolition of nuclear weapons."—[*Official Report*, 16 February 1995; Vol. 254, c. 1146.]

I agree with that, and, as a soldier, I would certainly have wished to see that. It is not much fun being a soldier in a noddy suit quietly frying away in a nuclear holocaust, any more than it would be for a child in the street.

We talk about reducing our nuclear weapons, and it is right that we should not know the exact numbers we possess—in Britain they amount to a few hundred nuclear warheads. The states of the former Soviet Union and the United States of America have thousands of warheads. As they start to negotiate a reduction in their warheads, it is right and proper that we should look at our numbers. We do not form an entity with the United States of America; we are a separate country—I know that all Opposition Members would agree with that. We must take into account our own interests, which are to protect ourselves.

The hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent showed an astonishing naivety. His speech revealed that, over the past 20, 30, or 50 years, some people have learnt nothing. It is evident that CND has learnt nothing from the recent past. The hon. Gentleman's speech could have been made at any time in the past 30 years; it took no account of the collapse of the Soviet Union or the deployment of cruise missiles.

I am sure that the hon. Gentleman and his friends in CND would and did argue against the deployment of cruise missiles, which, as has been revealed and as history will judge, was one of the factors that led to the breakdown of the Soviet Union as a major and threatening power.

I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would have opposed the Gulf war in 1991—he will correct me if I am wrong. His naivety is again revealed. What would Saddam Hussein have done if he had been allowed to continue invading, and controlled 40 per cent. of the world's oil reserves? He would have built nuclear weapons and used them against us. Contrary to what the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues may think, Saddam Hussein is not a charming, cuddly teddy bear, but an extremely unpleasant dictator.

**Mr. Jeremy Corbyn** (Islington, North): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Robathan:** Of course I shall give way to the true voice of the Labour party.

**Mr. Corbyn:** I thank that hon. Gentleman for his comment—perhaps the Labour party's Front-Bench team will listen carefully to what he said.

Will the hon. Gentleman cast his mind back to 1987 and 1988, when a very small number of Labour Back Benchers, including myself, were actively arguing for an arms embargo against Iraq and were raising the issues of human rights and chemical warfare in Iraq, and the attack on Halabjah and the treatment of the Kurdish people by Iraq? The British Government said that trade came first, and they would not introduce a trade embargo or anything else against Iraq. The hon. Gentleman should think a little bit about the history before making facile comments about the current position.

**Mr. Robathan:** I pay tribute to the hon. Gentleman for his integrity over the subject, for adopting an approach that is straight down the line, and for always holding that line. There are many countries with whom we might not have been trading. Perhaps we should never have traded with the Soviet Union as a whole, especially as we hear more awful tales coming out of the gulag. Would the hon. Gentleman say that we must not trade with China, which is employing fearsome and unpleasant tactics? We should not have been arming Iraq, and we did not.

The hon. Gentleman said that my comments were facile. I went to Iraq with the British Army in 1991, and I saw a vast array of weaponry in Iraq and Kuwait that was used by the Iraqi forces. But I saw no British weapons. I saw French Pumas, many MiGs, a vast array of eastern bloc, Soviet Union tanks, but no British weaponry. I know that the supergun was stopped here by the Government. We did not arm Iraq.

The hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) tries to throw dirt at his own country and say that it was our fault. I was injected against fearful things, such as anthrax, which Saddam Hussein might have used. The idea that anthrax could have been used in warfare is so horrific as to be almost unthinkable, but Saddam Hussein would have used it. It did not come from Britain. His chemical warfare potential came not from Britain, but from other countries. Instead of for ever running down his own country, the hon. Gentleman might consider the record of history, which will prove us right.

**Mr. Flynn:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Robathan:** I am always delighted to give way to the hon. Gentleman.

**Mr. Flynn:** There is an endless litany of equipment that Britain supplied to Iraq, including tank tracks, the precursor chemicals for both chemical and biological weapons, radar equipment and sophisticated heat-seeking equipment. There is a range of equipment, that I could list until the end of the debate. The hon. Gentleman is entirely wrong to suggest that Britain did not supply Saddam Hussein with a range of weapons of war.

**Mr. Robathan:** The hon. Gentleman says that there is a list, I cannot comment on the exact details of the equipment, as I cannot extract them from my memory, but the hon. Gentleman's list in terms of quantity and worth is nonsense. We did not supply Saddam Hussein with the bulk of his weaponry, which was from the eastern bloc. I wish that we could hear the hon. Gentleman condemn the eastern bloc and those countries that supplied Saddam Hussein.

We were discussing nuclear proliferation. I am glad to see that no Opposition Member has denied that Saddam Hussein is keen on having nuclear weapons, that he is difficult to pin down and untrustworthy. That is why I say that the fact that they would have opposed the Gulf war shows great naivety. They would have let Saddam Hussein build up his nuclear arsenal, and would have seen him use it.

I shall go back further than the Gulf war and the second world war, to disarmament in the 1930s. Most people would say that disarmament in Britain in the 1930s acted as a signal to the powers of the Axis that perhaps Britain was not interested in fighting. The House will recall the famous Oxford union debate, where it was said that disarmament acted as a great signal to Hitler that this House would not fight for king and country.

**Mr. Mike Gapes** (Ilford, South): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the left in this country, including Michael Foot, were actively engaged in calling for collective security against fascism, and that the Conservative Government appeased Nazism at that time—just as Conservative Governments are inclined to appease brutal regimes such as the Chinese regime today?

**Mr. Robathan:** I would not accept that. I would say that the hon. Gentleman's reading of history is slightly flawed—very flawed, in fact. I have a history degree, and I can assure him that that is not the way that I read it. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman has a history degree. However, let us not get bogged down.

Just as in the 1930s those who argued for disarmament were wrong, so in the 1990s those who say that we should one-sidedly, unilaterally, disarm are wrong. Yes, we would all like to see a world without war, particularly nuclear war, but the world is not like that.

How pleasant it would be if, for once, Opposition Members put the defence of the United Kingdom at the top of their list, instead of for ever knocking the Government and suggesting that there must be something wrong because the Government retain weapons that can defend the United Kingdom. I too would like to see nuclear proliferation stopped. I would like our nuclear weapons to be reduced as they are reduced around the world, and if it were possible to abolish them completely, that would be welcome.

Today, we have again seen the true face of the Labour party. I am grateful to Opposition Members for revealing that what we have read about Labour party policy is not the same as that which really dwells on the Back Benches of the Labour party.

10.42 am

**Mr. Neil Gerrard** (Walthamstow): I am glad to be able to make a brief contribution to the debate. I will be brief because other hon. Members wish to speak. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) on obtaining the debate, and on his speech opening it.

I shall make my position clear at the beginning. I have been a member of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament for many years, and I am a member of its national council. I support Labour party policy, as expressed at our most recent conference, on scrapping Trident.

The debate is supposed to be about the non-proliferation treaty, but not very much of the last speech was about it. It seems that the indefinite extension of the treaty is likely to be presented to us as a success. We need to ask whether the indefinite extension of the treaty, without any changes in the policies that have been adopted through the past 25 years of its existence, represents success, and whether we should not instead say that, positive though the treaty has been, we should move forward, to change and develop those policies.

The fundamental problem, as my hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent pointed out, is the contradiction in the policies of the major nuclear powers, including the UK. We tell other countries who are potential proliferators that they must not have nuclear weapons, that they are not legitimate and unnecessary for their security. Yet at the same time, we pursue policies that say that we cannot have security without nuclear weapons. That is a fundamental contradiction.

As has been pointed out already, in the past few years, we have not merely retained the nuclear weapons we had. Trident itself was proliferation, because it has more warheads and more targets can be hit. Of course the yield of nuclear weapons was higher in the 1970s, but Trident can hit six times as many targets as Polaris. The recent announcements that we will scrap the free-fall bomb and that we will not produce new fissile materials seem to be designed more to persuade some people at the NPT conference to accept indefinite extension rather than as a real change of policy.

*[Mr. Neil Gerrard]*

What about security guarantees? Why is it that we are not prepared to give unconditional guarantees of no first use against non-nuclear states? The statement on 5 April by the UK and other nuclear powers still contains a long, long list of exceptions. It may be argued that, by guaranteeing security for countries potentially threatened by nuclear-armed enemies, we are persuading them that they do not need to develop their own nuclear weapons. I believe that the only context in which that argument might possibly have been valid was in the situation that existed during the cold war.

Over the past few years, did close relationships with the US or the existence of the non-proliferation treaty prevent Israel or Pakistan from developing nuclear weapons? Why will those states not admit that they are nuclear powers? Why do such states seek nuclear capability? Israel still refuses to admit to such a capability, even though Mordecai Vanunu has spent years in solitary confinement for exposing Israel's nuclear programme. It wanted to acquire nuclear weapons because of its regional and local conflicts.

Consider what the Foreign Secretary said recently about the need to resist aggression having taken this country to war four times this century:

"looking at the world as it is now . . . I am driven to the conclusion that most of the difficult choices facing us will in future arise not from acts of aggression, but from disasters within a nation state."—[*Official Report*, 23 February 1993; Vol. 219, c. 773.]

I would suggest that it is not only disasters within nation states but regional conflicts that present the greatest problems.

We can imagine the dangers of proliferation to countries where the potential proliferators are neighbours with long histories of conflict. Iraq has already been mentioned. Iraq was crushed, but, as has been pointed out, if it had not invaded Kuwait, Iraq would have had nuclear weapons by now.

What would be the potential for conflict in Israel or Pakistan if their neighbours had nuclear weapons? That is precisely the sort of situation we may well be faced with if proliferation is not stopped. Mass proliferation has not happened yet, but I do not believe that that should give us confidence that it will not happen in future.

We are dealing with what is now an old technology. There are massive stocks of plutonium and evidence of illegal trading in it. One of the basic flaws in the existing non-proliferation treaty is that its emphasis leads to the export of nuclear technologies for power generation. It is one of the trade-offs of the NPT that countries such as North Korea are told not to develop nuclear weapons, but that we will help them acquire nuclear technology for peaceful purposes.

That ignores the very thin dividing lines, if such dividing lines exist at all, between so-called civil and military plutonium. Such dividing lines exist more on paper and in facile arguments than in reality. As my hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent pointed out, the US Department of Energy has now admitted that a nuclear test was carried out in 1962 using so-called civil plutonium.

The major weakness of the present approach is the failure clearly to link an extension of the non-proliferation treaty with disarmament. I believe, with my hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent, that we need a limited extension but to attach other targets to it, such as a global treaty to ban nuclear weapons, treaties to halt production of fissile materials, tighter control of existing stocks, better inspections, and the deployment of the nuclear weapons that exist only in the territories of the states that own them.

We should not continue the present double standards and the stance of saying that Trident is not open to negotiation, or is only negotiable when the numbers of weapons held by the US and Russia are down to hundreds. That is saying that we will never negotiate, because by the time that that happens, Trident will probably be obsolete.

At the moment, we do not have from the Government a commitment to negotiate. They are back-tracking from any serious suggestion of disarmament. A tremendous opportunity is being missed in the period in which we are considering the extension of the non-proliferation treaty.

10.49 am

**Mr. Iain Duncan Smith** (Chingford): I am pleased to be called to participate in the debate. I am aware that many Labour Members wish to speak, so I shall keep my comments brief.

**Mr. Jeremy Corbyn** (Islington, North): We are not interrupting.

**Mr. Duncan Smith:** I shall not take any interventions.

**Mr. Corbyn:** I was not going to intervene.

**Mr. Duncan Smith:** That is good of you.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) on securing a debate on the non-proliferation treaty. There is a remarkable sense of honesty in the debate. I had heard many of his final remarks before: although he did not express any new ideas, his views were are at least honestly outlined. I have been aware for some time, too, of the concerns expressed by the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Gerrard).

I have believed for a long time that the non-proliferation treaty has been passed by. Discussing it is rather like watching the horse when it has already bolted. I read an article a year ago which said that we must face the fact that proliferation has taken place and is taking place. There is no possibility that we can somehow restrict the possession of nuclear weapons to a small club. In the next five or seven years, that will be shown to be manifestly impossible.

I am fully aware that there is a chain of proliferation, and at its apex are North Korea and China. There is no question but that they have been busily pushing technology out and taking money in. North Korea has been developing nuclear weapons for a considerable time and, to all intents and purposes, it is highly probable that it has at least five nuclear devices capable of being used—not just computer models but laboratory nuclear devices. One definitely exists.

My concern is not simply that such devices stay in North Korea; I am worried about the links with the middle east. Iraq and Iran have been busy funding North Korea's nuclear programme. Iran itself has a nuclear technology programme worth some £500 million a year and has been funding the North Koreans to use that technology.

Another aspect of the problem, which has not been mentioned but which is equally dangerous, is the capability to launch nuclear weapons. North Korea has been engaged in a phenomenal ballistic missile-building programme. It is busy producing a missile called the NoDong II, which will have a range of more than 2,000 km and will probably be capable of being used in the next five years. Iran has a very serious interest in that missile, because it has funded it. I believe that Iran and possibly Iraq have been used as a testing range for some launches, because North Korea does not have a suitable land mass on which to carry out tests.

Coupled with that link is the fact that the old Soviet Union is very unstable. We are not quite sure whether only nuclear weapons have changed hands. Even more devastating is the fact that some of the former Soviet Union's scientists are short of money and underfunded, and are capable of transferring their technology.

There is absolutely no question but that proliferation has taken place. Last year, the ex-Premier of Pakistan admitted that Pakistan had a nuclear device. It was hotly denied, but I believe that it has at least a laboratory device.

The big question is, what is to be done? The hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent and his colleagues will no doubt say, quite honestly and reasonably, that we should aim for a complete abolition of nuclear weapons. It is a laudable view, which I should support if I believed for one moment we could achieve it. I should be the first to say that that would be the perfect scenario, but it is not feasible.

How are we to safeguard our future? The situation will become more dangerous in the next seven or eight years, as very unstable regimes obtain a nuclear capability and—even more dangerous for western Europe—the capability to launch nuclear weapons. We need to face the fact that unstable regimes will possess nuclear weapons—it is not a question of if or even how, but when. The ladder of escalation needs to be considered. We might accept that the non-proliferation treaty is a laudable and serious attempt to restrict and slow down that process, but it will not stop it.

I have yet to hear any spokesman deal with the problem of what a country should do when it knows that an unstable regime is about to possess nuclear capability or is capable of making a threat. If a country in those circumstances has nuclear weapons, should it make some form of pre-emptive strike? Could it make a non-nuclear pre-emptive strike? Is the possession of nuclear weapons necessary for a pre-emptive strike?

We must consider whether we would go all the way and use nuclear weapons. The Opposition have yet to answer such questions. That is the debate in which we should engage, not a wishy-washy, "Should we or shouldn't we?" but, "When it happens, will we be prepared to use nuclear weapons?" The possession of such weapons is of no use unless we have the will to use them. If we possess nuclear weapons, we must make it clear that we are prepared to use them; otherwise, we might as well not possess them.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent for providing the opportunity to debate this subject.

10.55 am

**Mr. Alan Simpson** (Nottingham, South): I was interested to hear what the hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan Smith) said, and I shall respond to just two of the points he raised.

First, the hon. Gentleman asked whether we should be prepared to use nuclear weapons in a pre-emptive move against states that are in breach of the non-proliferation treaty or which threaten to breach it. The answer has to be an unequivocal no. I have never heard anyone, in the House or elsewhere, suggest that the way to deal, for instenace, with Israel's breach of the NPT in acquiring its own nuclear weapons would be to nuke it.

Secondly, we need to deal with the international community's failure to have an interventionist, monitoring regime which acts to halt the supply of information and technology related to the building, development and testing of nuclear materials. We must set the debate in that context.

I wish clearly to outline my position. I unequivocally support a limited extension of the NPT, and I speak unapologetically as a member of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. It is important at least to put on record some of what is being said in the current conference on extension, but which is not being admitted in the House by Ministers.

I am grateful to Greenpeace in particular for its monitoring of the conference. It is worth reading into the record the opening of its latest brief about the state of the negotiations:

"The Nuclear Weapons States, particularly the UK and France, have come in for some heavy criticism at the NPT talks in New York. As delegates debate review language in closed committees, there is growing concern about the high-handed attitudes of the United Kingdom and France, and the fact that they see no need to agree stronger measures for the implementation of their own obligations, particularly under Article VI of the Treaty. These criticisms are not just coming from the non-aligned countries, but also from a number of Western and EU countries."

That is the context in which the real debates in the extension conference are taking place.

The Foreign Secretary did not tell us that a series of other demands were being made, often by European colleagues as well as non-aligned states. For instance, Sweden and Switzerland have been demanding that there should be a timetable for nuclear disarmament. Germany, in the form of comments by Klaus Kinkel, its Foreign Minister, has demanded that something be done about the inclusion of existing stockpiles of civil nuclear materials in the negotiation and treaty framework. He said:

"hundreds of tonnes of spare plutonium must be reliably monitored. I repeat in this context my proposal for an international plutonium regime. Let us seize the chance which will not come again to ban the bomb".

The non-aligned countries are putting a different slant on things. At their recent meeting in Indonesia, from 25 to 27 April, the ministerial group of the non-aligned countries expressed its deep concern about the failure of nuclear weapons states to adhere fully to their obligations under the current treaty. The vast majority of non-aligned states are pushing for an alternative to indefinite extension.

Zimbabwe in many ways expressed the view that is held as a common-sense understanding in the non-aligned and non-nuclear states when it said:

"we should not hurry to immortalise a clearly imperfect treaty . . . we should seriously consider extension options only after the NPT has been adequately transformed into an action-orientated instrument that will guide us progressively towards total nuclear disarmament."

Those are the views being expressed in the conference which our Government are not reporting, and certainly not supporting.

*[Mr. Alan Simpson]*

The sadness in all this is that we are also adopting a position in the negotiations in which we seek to deny or dismiss the criticisms specifically levelled at the United Kingdom. In the non-nuclear world, it is readily understood that the acquisition of Trident is an act of proliferation; that reprocessing, whether of the WE177 warheads or of civil plutonium, is proliferation by stealth; and that the 1977 treaty on nuclear safeguards, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) referred, has specifically identified 70 occasions on which the UK has raided its civil plutonium stocks for military purposes.

It is clear that the Anglo-American mutual defence agreement, on which I managed to get a Consolidated Fund debate, has been used by us as a means to disregard the commitments that we entered into under the original non-proliferation treaty. The 10-year extension for the barter arrangements between us and America is specifically for

"special nuclear material for all development of, or use in atomic weapons."

All these are ways in which we, as part of a privileged club, are totally disregarding the obligations we solemnly entered into.

Yesterday, a paper was presented by the chairman of main committee 1 in the NPT negotiations. He said:

"The conference notes that among States Parties there are variations in the interpretation of certain aspects of Articles I and II which need clarification, especially regarding the obligations of nuclear-weapon States Parties among themselves, and when acting in co-operation with groups of non-nuclear-weapon States Parties under regional arrangements which may have resulted in transfer of nuclear weapons in violation of the spirit of the objective of Article I."

Under the mutual defence agreement, there has been a new development, in which we are actively involved in simulation nuclear testing. The weight of opinion among non-nuclear weapon states is that this is not a standstill or status quo. For nuclear weapon states to shift the basis of their testing to sophisticated, computerised simulation models is regarded as an act of proliferation in breach of the existing treaty.

We need to send the Foreign Secretary back into the NPT negotiations, and to get the United Kingdom to set out four key positions, for which we should argue and to which we should adhere. The first is for a limited extension of the treaty. The second is a commitment to no use of recyclable nuclear materials or current stocks for nuclear weapons purposes.

The third is a timetable for reverse proliferation. That is not a utopian waving of wands, saying that all nuclear weapons would go, but a timetable for reverse proliferation which would head towards such a global ban on nuclear weapons. In that sense, we would all welcome the Labour party policy of banning Trident.

Fourthly, we would have to have a commitment to a broader international regime to assist the movement of states away from dependence on nuclear power. That is the comprehensive framework in which the NPT extension treaty should now be considered.

11.4 am

**Mr. Mike Gapes** (Ilford, South): I shall speak in defence of the non-proliferation treaty and for its indefinite extension. It is important that those who, like me, are critical of the inadequacies of the NPT do not throw the baby out with the bath water. The Select Committee on Foreign Affairs took extensive evidence in its inquiry into the non-proliferation treaty from a number of organisations including not only the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, but the Atlantic Council.

The people from the Atlantic Council believe that this country needs to keep nuclear weapons for ever, yet they argued the same line, from a completely different perspective, as that of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. They argued not for an indefinite extension, but for a limited extension, because they saw an indefinite extension of the NPT as a measure against the continuation of nuclear weapons rather than as a measure that would facilitate that continuation.

If we have only a limited extension of the NPT, there will be a serious temptation towards proliferation over the next 10 to 15 years. The number of countries that have acquired nuclear weapons over the past few years has been lower than was predicted in the 1960s or 1970s. I believe that the NPT has contributed to that restraint. That does not mean that the NPT is a perfect treaty—far from it.

The obligations under article VI, which have already been mentioned, are not being fulfilled by the nuclear weapons states. Some nuclear weapons states, principally the former Soviet Union and the United States, have made steps towards the disarmament of nuclear weapons. Other nuclear weapon states have got rid of obsolete systems, as our Government have, and have shown no real desire to make a commitment to the process.

Within the NPT negotiations, the British Government's position would be more comfortable if they had shifted their stance on a comprehensive test ban treaty, and if the Foreign Secretary, when giving evidence to our Select Committee a few weeks ago, had not ruled out a complete, indefinite ban on the testing of British nuclear weapons.

It seems that the British Government have stopped nuclear testing only because the Americans have stopped theirs, and because they no longer allow the Nevada test facility to be available. If someone else made a facility available, or if the Americans changed their position, our Government would presumably be prepared to start testing again. Perhaps the Minister will refer to this point. It is important that we get a clear, unambiguous statement that Britain will no longer test nuclear weapons, and that we support an early comprehensive test ban treaty.

My hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Gerrard) mentioned security assurances. It appears that, as a result of some international and domestic criticism, our Government have shifted their position slightly over recent weeks. They have similarly shifted their position on the hydro-testing of nuclear weapons. It could be that they are feeling the heat internationally. Good.

Our existing position of saying, "Don't do as we do, do as we say," is untenable and immoral. If, as a signatory of the non-proliferation treaty, we believe in steps towards the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, it ill becomes us to be so grudging about including our nuclear capabilities in disarmament negotiations. We should move towards giving guarantees and assurances to non-nuclear weapon states following the end of the cold war.

Other hon. Members have referred to the cold war. If we are honest, we should admit that we all got it wrong. No one, including the advocates of massive arms

build-ups, the advocates of unilateralism and the advocates of other points of view, could have predicted in 1986 or 1987 what would happen three years later.

None of us could predict what was going to happen, so it is ridiculous to try to score points off each other based on hindsight. No one predicted the fall of the Berlin wall or the end of the cold war. In such circumstances, it is important that we use a little humility, and acknowledge that the international situation is complex. We therefore need to work together to try to create a safer and more peaceful world.

11.9 am

**Mr. Tony Lloyd** (Stretford): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) on obtaining this important debate covering a number of issues. Let me make it clear at the beginning of my speech that the Labour party is very much committed to the non-proliferation treaty and to an indefinite extension of it. That should be placed on record, because it is a matter of practical fact that the world in which we live is still an extremely dangerous place.

We may have seen an end to the arms race between the super-powers, but it is recognised throughout the international community that there is still danger from existing stocks of nuclear weapons and weapons grade material, from proliferation in new states, to which hon. Members of all parties have referred, and from proliferation in terrorist groups and maverick bodies.

The non-proliferation treaty has been a success—but not an absolute success. President Kennedy envisaged in 1962 that, within a few years, there would be 20 or 30 new nuclear states. The treaty and the spirit which underlies it may have prevented the world from realising that view. For example, Brazil and Argentina have concluded a mutual pact, and Argentina has subscribed to the NPT; South Africa has taken the step to dismantle its nuclear programme; and, with the break-up of the former Soviet Union, Kazakhstan and Ukraine have acceded to the treaty. Those moves can be counted as real successes of the treaty.

Of course there have also been failures. We have seen the growth of nuclear activity in the middle east. Certainly, the state of Israel possesses nuclear weapons, and Iraq and—arguably—Iran were seeking to go down the same path. There is little doubt, too, that, in the Indian sub-continent, India and Pakistan are nuclear-capable. In those respects, the success of the treaty has been limited. Nevertheless, we should count it as a success. We should recognise the nature of the bargain that underlies the treaty, which is always pointed out; whereby those states without nuclear weapons, which accept that they will not move to nuclear weapons capacity, accept in turn that the nuclear weapon states will take active steps under article IV to begin to dismantle their own capabilities.

Britain could have gone to the 20th anniversary conference of the treaty offering political and moral leadership to the world. Instead, at every stage, Britain has been dragged grudgingly to that conference, and has been forced at a very late stage to make concessions. While we welcome those concessions, they are not signs of a nation in the lead in the debate. Sadly, they are signs of a country lagging behind world opinion.

When the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs recently asked the Foreign Secretary whether he foresaw an era in which Britain may not possess nuclear weapons, he said:

> "I do not actually see any particular motive on our part to change that situation and I do not feel any particular pressure from others, either other nuclear weapon states or non-nuclear weapon states, to change it either."

Contrast those words with the many comments made at the conference in New York. For example, the Australians said:

> "We must press ahead toward the goal of elimination of nuclear weapons",

and the South Africans commented:

> "The time may also be right for considering whether the arsenals of the other Nuclear Weapon States"—

they are Britain, France and China—

> "should not be included in this process."

The world expects de-escalation and Britain to play a stronger role than we have previously played.

The world welcomes some steps taken by the Government. We welcome the fact that, at the moment, there is a moratorium on nuclear testing. My hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Gapes) asked a question to which I hope the Minister will respond forcibly: what is the Government's exact position on testing of nuclear weapons?

We know that, as recently as January, the Foreign Secretary was not prepared to give a commitment to the Foreign Affairs Select Committee. Let us put the position unequivocally on the record, as of today. Will Britain play a leading and constructive role in the pursuit of a test ban treaty, rather than, as it has done in the recent past, frustrate progress?

Of course we welcome a cessation of the production of fissile material. That is an important step, for which the Opposition have been calling for some time. I do not want to sound negative, but, for the indefinite future, Britain's stocks of nuclear grade material will allow us to provide all the warheads needed for any programme—real or foreseen—introduced by the present or, indeed, any future Government.

We also welcome the decommissioning of the WE177 free-fall bombs, but it must be said that those weapons systems were obsolete, and that, once Trident is fully deployed, the simple truth is that we shall have more warheads at our disposal, and certainly more capacity to target different sites, than we had at the end of the cold war.

Progress has been very limited. Indeed, when it was proposed that the European Union communiqué to be put to the conference in New York should include the words

> "The conference welcomed also the significant reductions by France and the UK in their nuclear programmes",

even our close allies—the Swedes, the Irish and the Austrians—were not prepared to accept them. They felt that the progress made by our Government was grudging and not enough.

In the time remaining, I shall describe where the threats to the world lie, what the Labour party wants from this Government, and what a Labour Government will put into practice.

We know that the threat of proliferation is still real. We saw in the case of Iraq, to which my hon. Friends have referred, that the British Government were extremely complacent in the way in which they allowed the development of nuclear systems by the Iraqi regime. It is no good Ministers saying in moments of high hypocrisy that they somehow dealt with that situation. The world was complacent in the extreme, because it was not

*[Mr. Tony Lloyd]*

prepared to fund the International Atomic Energy Agency and give it the capacity by which to ensure that the inspection system needed was provided. We must learn from those lessons.

When the Foreign Affairs Select Committee asked the Foreign Secretary about funding of the IAEA, he said:

"As you know, our general policy towards funding of UN agencies is one of seeking to maintain zero real growth and that remains our objective."

Despite the fact that he went on to say that he recognised that, in the context of the agency's work, it would be necessary to review the situation, we need a guarantee that the agency will be given the funding it needs to do the work that the world demands.

We also need guarantees on the challenge inspection system, which worked in the context of North Korea, to which the hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan-Smith) referred. In fact, the lessons of Iraq and the challenge system provoked the crisis which led to a change in the situation with respect to North Korea. We have to recognise—

**Mr. Duncan Smith** *rose—*

**Mr. Lloyd:** If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I shall not give way.

We must recognise the need for that tough challenge inspection system and a properly funded IAEA.

We must also recognise another threat. We know that there have been three major interceptions of weapons grade material coming out of the former Soviet Union, so we need to work with our international partners and Russia to ensure that that threat diminishes. We need a regime to begin to control stocks of weapons grade material in Russia, the former Soviet Union and, more generally, throughout the world because the accessibility and availability of such material threatens the world through proliferation to states and maverick organisations.

Let me say clearly what a Labour Government would do. A Labour Government would want to limit the number of warheads on Trident to those on the present Polaris system. We would want to ensure that the world was aware of the situation with respect to warheads. The kind of secrecy that the Government have displayed, which allows the Russians to respond with equivalent secrecy, has no place in the role played by article IV and general nuclear de-escalation. That is a message which the Government should take on board. We want proper security assurances. The Government's waffle words at the New York conference are inadequate. They do not lead to the confidence building which the non-aligned states and the non-nuclear weapon states demand.

A Labour Government would make it clear that there would be no first use of nuclear weapons. Nor would nuclear weapons be used against non-nuclear weapon states. The Minister would do well to contemplate that, and respond with the Government's position.

A Labour Government would ensure that we supported efforts to secure proper international obligations and control over stocks of weapons grade material. We need such international mechanisms, and Britain would play its part by being clear about its stocks. A Labour Government would ensure that we had an International Atomic Energy Agency capable, and properly funded, to do the job that the world demands.

In addition, let me make it clear that a Labour Government would work very closely with countries like South Africa in pushing for a standing consultative committee to ensure that the problems that arise from time to time are brought before that committee on an on-going basis, instead of having to wait for the regular five-yearly review. The Minister would do well to explain the Government's position in that regard, but not in terms of the waffle words of recent parliamentary answers.

In the brief moments that I have had to comment on behalf of the Labour party, I wanted to contrast the incompetence of this Government, who have signally failed in their duty to the country and to the world, and who have failed to give any political or moral leadership at the conference in New York, with what a Labour Government would have done and what Labour says could have been done. I assure the House that, with a Labour Government, the non-proliferation treaty would be in much safer hands than it has been under this Government.

11.21 am

**The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. David Davis):** I congratulate the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) on obtaining the debate. He maintains an honourable tradition for his constituency in doing so. I also welcome the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd), who made his first speech as spokesman on this subject. I thought that it was a good outing.

However, from listening to the hon. Member for Stretford after listening to Labour Back Benchers, it became clear that, between them, they revealed the tortured soul of the Labour party on nuclear deterrent issues—*[Interruption.]* Unless, of course, the hon. Member for Stretford thinks that the Labour party has no soul.

**Mr. Flynn:** Will the Minister give way?

**Mr. Davis:** I am afraid that I cannot, as I have only nine minutes to cover many points. I apologise for that.

The hon. Member for Stretford concluded by trying to contrast the Government with the Labour party. He more effectively contrasted the pretences on the Labour Front Bench with the realities on the Back Benches.

This morning's debate clearly showed that nearly all hon. Members consider the non-proliferation treaty to be crucial. Several hon. Members, particularly the hon. Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Gapes), made honest speeches on that. I want to set out the Government's position at this point, just over halfway through the non-proliferation treaty review and extension conference in New York. In doing so, I hope that I can answer as many as possible of the questions that have been raised.

By the time the conference ends on 12 May, we hope that we will have achieved our objective of indefinite extension to the treaty, either by consensus or with a substantial majority. The number of states that favour indefinite extension is growing all the time. All states belonging to the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe—formerly the CSCE—favour indefinite extension, as now do a growing number of non-aligned countries.

Why is indefinite extension so important? Twenty-five years ago, when the treaty came into being, it was widely expected that 20 or 30 states would acquire nuclear

weapons. The hon. Member for Stretford raised that point. Clearly, that has not happened. The hon. Members for Walthamstow (Mr. Gerrard) and for Ilford, South stressed the value of the NPT in that process.

In a world of ever greater risk, the treaty provides a framework of stability and predictability essential to the continued control of proliferation, as well as to further efforts towards disarmament and peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The hon. Member for Stretford itemised some of the gains, so I will not repeat them, as he made those points very well.

Anything less than indefinite extension could imply termination of the treaty in 25, 15, or even 10 years' time. We have to consider what message that that would convey to a potential proliferator, or indeed—given that they were mentioned so many times by Opposition Members—to Israel, India and Pakistan, whose accession to the treaty we all fervently desire.

It would be much more difficult to consider further steps towards disarmament or to encourage investment in the nuclear industries of developing countries if there was a risk that the constraints imposed by the treaty would disappear within a decade or two.

**Mr. Harold Elletson** (Blackpool, North): Will my hon. Friend give way?

**Mr. Davis:** If my hon. Friend will forgive me, I will not, as I do not have enough time.

Of course the treaty is not a perfect instrument. It is a major concern, which has been stated by hon. Members on both sides of the House, that Iraq—a treaty party—came close to acquiring nuclear weaponry, and that North Korea, another party, has tried to shrug aside its obligations under the treaty. My hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan Smith) made a powerful and expert contribution on that matter. My hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan) also made some very good points on that issue.

I highlight how dangerous it is for Opposition Members to pretend enormous foresight on this issue. The hon. Member for Stretford, the present Labour spokesman on these matters, signed an early-day motion back in 1986 which praised the international liaison committee for peaceful and independent reunification of Korea—a North Korean front organisation—for organising a conference

"for the declaration of the Korean Peninsula as a nuclear free peace zone".

That rather makes the point better than anything else I could say.

The treaty provides the legal basis that enables us to summon such states before the bar of international opinion. Work is under way to make good deficiencies in the safeguards regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency. Originally, that regime focused only on declared nuclear activity—hence the agency's apparent failure to alert the world to what Saddam Hussein was up to.

Following the experience with Saddam Hussein, there was tightening up, and the agency sounded the warning bell about North Korea, as has been pointed out. The director-general of the International Atomic Energy Agency has now made further proposals which, when implemented, will give the agency a greater ability to identify undeclared nuclear activity.

Those proposals include enhanced inspections and more access to suspected nuclear facilities; a requirement on states to provide more detailed information than hitherto; and environmental monitoring, such as soil sampling around suspected sites. We strongly support those proposals, and will work for their early implementation.

Many hon. Members have referred to the bargain which they assert the treaty represents between nuclear weapon states and non-nuclear weapon states. That is a bargain by the nuclear weapon states, undertaken in article VI of the treaty, to pursue negotiations on nuclear disarmament in return for the non-nuclear states agreeing never to acquire nuclear weapons and to accept safeguards on their nuclear activities. However, article VI does not set a timetable for disarmament negotiations. We do not believe that setting an arbitrary timetable would make disarmament negotiations any more likely to succeed.

All that said, let us consider what the nuclear weapon states have done. Some have claimed that they have not kept the bargain. That charge was echoed by Opposition Members, including the hon. Members for Nottingham, South (Mr. Simpson) and for Stretford. Those charges betray an extraordinary reluctance to recognise the enormity of the changes that have taken place over the past decade.

Article VI calls for an end to the nuclear arms race. Thanks in part to the NPT, but of course also to the great changes in east-west relations, it is obvious that there is now no nuclear arms race. Indeed, there is almost a race to reduce nuclear weapons. Missile warheads and launchers are being dismantled, bombers are being destroyed and silos emptied.

**Mr. Corbyn:** So why are we building more?

**Mr. Davis:** If we had followed the CND nostrums which I hear shouted across the Chamber, we would never have imagined, let alone managed, that enormous achievement.

Under the INF and START agreements between the United States and Russia, thousands of intermediate and other tactical nuclear weapons are being put out of commission and more than 17,000 strategic weapons and bombers eliminated. The US Administration have said that they are dismantling some 2,000 nuclear weapons a year, and the Russians are deactivating their systems ahead of schedule.

**Mr. Corbyn:** What about Britain?

**Mr. Davis:** Britain has played a full part in that disarmament process. Although we have always maintained our deterrent at the minimum level commensurate with the strategic environment, we have eliminated our land and surface maritime tactical nuclear capability; reduced by more than 50 per cent. the number of WE177 nuclear bombs carried by our aircraft, and announced that all remaining WE177 bombs will be withdrawn by the end of 1998— I noted the grudging comment of the hon. Member for Stretford—when they will not be replaced by other systems, which is the key point.

The net effect of those changes is that, by the end of the decade, the UK will have only one nuclear weapons system, one fifth fewer warheads, and three fifths less explosive power than during the 1970s. That is a major

*[Mr. Davis]*

reduction. Even when START II is implemented, British nuclear forces will be considerably less than 10 per cent. of the total nuclear forces available to the Americans or to Russia.

Our deterrence is truly minimal. If the rest of the world had seen cuts of that magnitude in other types of weaponry, the world might be much safer and its peoples less vulnerable to regional strife. It is no good the Opposition harping on about the replacement of Polaris by Trident. What matters is total capability.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes):** Order. We must move to the next topic.



## County Structure Plan (Lancashire)

11.30 am

**Mr. Harold Elletson** (Blackpool, North): I am grateful for this opportunity to debate the Lancashire structure plan, but I find it more than a little extraordinary that no Liberal Democrats are present. I am sure that many of my constituents in wards which are represented by Liberal Democrat councillors and are facing significant pressure on the few remaining open spaces in the town will draw the appropriate conclusions in the local government elections tomorrow.

The Lancashire structure plan is still in its consultation phase and there is therefore little that my hon. Friend the Minister can say about its specific provisions, but it is right that Lancashire Members should have the chance to comment on them and I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to respond to the more general issues that this and similar plans raise.

Much in the structure plan is commendable. It sets a broad strategic approach which attempts to deal with some of the main problems facing the county. It addresses the need to balance economic growth with a more sustainable pattern of development. It attempts to improve the image of the county so as to maximise inward investment. It looks at how to correct past imbalances in development between the west and east of the county. Those are all laudable objectives and important issues that the structure plan is right to identify.

The devil, however, is in the detail: the aspect of the plan that most concerns me is the damaging effect that it will have on Lancashire's environment and it is that aspect, above all else, that I shall concentrate on today.

There is now a widespread appreciation of the Government's environmental credentials. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in particular has demonstrated his personal commitment to the environment and has won the support and trust of many previously sceptical pressure groups. The Government have addressed with determination great global environmental issues such as climate change and global warming and as a consequence green politics appears less and less to preoccupy the minds of the public; yet still I sense a fundamental unease about the future, a feeling that what people care about—their own local environment—is under growing threat, and that the countryside of England is gradually but relentlessly being worn away.

Sometimes, perhaps as yet infrequently, that unease explodes into passionate demonstrations against plans to bulldoze ancient woodlands or to cover water meadows in tarmac. It is the same sense of unease about which the great English poet Philip Larkin wrote when he was commissioned by the Department of the Environment when it was set up in 1972. Conservative Members know that the Minister is particularly fond of poetry, so he will not mind my quoting Philip Larkin's poem, "Going, Going". He wrote:

"I thought it would last my time—the sense that, beyond the town, there would always be fields and farms.
Where the village louts could climb
Such trees as were not cut down;—
It seems, just now,
to be happening so very fast;
Despite all the land left free
For the first time I feel somehow
that it isn't going to last,
That before I snuff it, the whole
Boiling will be bricked in
Except for the tourist parts—
And that will be England gone,
The shadows, the meadows, the lanes,
The Guildhalls, the carved choirs,
There'll be books; it will linger on
In galleries; but all that remains
For us will be concrete and tyres".

We cannot underestimate the despair, alienation and anger that people feel about the destruction of the countryside, particularly when it is happening in their own backyards on the edges of towns and villages. That is the big environmental issue today. That is what people are really concerned about: the destruction of their piece of countryside, their green lung, their little open space. We cannot underestimate the power of those feelings because we can only guess at the emotions, the memories, the sense of security, well-being and community that are bound up in the land.

I cannot help thinking that, unless we—all of us, the Government and local authorities—decide to stop bulldozing the countryside and look for sustainable alternatives, there will be dozens more demonstrations like the one this week against the M65 in Stanworth valley and hundreds more police will have to be deployed to pull protestors down from the branches and the blossom before, finally, the endless tides of concrete wash over us all.

When Larkin wrote his poem, much less of England had been bricked in and much less had been destroyed. This weekend, we will celebrate the end of the second world war, but I doubt whether many of those who did not return from the conflict would recognise their country today. In the south-west alone, since 1945 the urban area has increased by two thirds. That is an increase of 84,000 hectares. An area of countryside half the size of Greater Manchester has been lost to development.

One third of the north-west is now urban. It is the most urban region in the country; yet Lancashire county council is planning more concrete and more tarmac. Its structure plan—which it calls, perhaps ironically, "Greening the County"—plans to seize for building and industry 3,700 hectares, much of it green fields at the edges of our towns and villages. It plans to drive a new road through the heart of some of the most beautiful countryside in east Lancashire by extending the M65 beyond Colne, and it is planning a further 23 road schemes in the county. That is not greening the county but greying it.

I want to deal with four aspects of the structure plan before discussing some of the wider issues on which I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will elaborate.

**Mr. Nick Hawkins** (Blackpool, South): Before my hon. Friend discusses those four points, does he agree that one of the ironies of what he has been saying is that the same people whom we have seen on television this week—the demonstrators in the trees and lobbying on the single issue—are frequently activists for left-wing parties, but are opposed by the very left-wing Lancashire county council? It is perhaps because of the irony of that conflict—it is the left arguing with itself—that just one Labour Lancashire Member dares to come to the debate; all the others cannot be bothered.

**Mr. Elletson:** As usual, my hon. Friend makes a telling point. It is clear that the Labour party in Lancashire cannot be regarded as having any credible environmental credentials at all.

**Dr. John Reid** (Motherwell, North): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Elletson:** I am delighted to give way and to have a Scottish perspective on our problems in Lancashire.

**Dr. Reid:** I do not want to antagonise the hon. Gentleman, but if it were not for the Scottish perspective and Scottish money, his town of Blackpool would be less prosperous than it is at the moment, as he knows. At the risk of ruining his career and mine, I must say that I have thoroughly enjoyed his speech so far: it is nice to hear a speech that does not sound like a desiccated calculating machine when it comes to planning issues.

Does the hon. Gentleman agree that there is great risk in trying to portray those who are concerned with the environment as merely on the left, for the sake of making a party political point? The points that the hon. Gentleman makes in such resounding fashion about the quality of life are of concern to people right across the political spectrum and to many people who are not involved in party politics or, indeed, in regional issues.

**Mr. Elletson:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. Of course I recognise the great contribution made by Scottish people to Blackpool's economy, and I accept some of what the hon. Gentleman has said. I had hoped that, inspired by my quotation from one of England's great poets, he would himself quote Robert Burns.

The Lancashire structure plan rightly concludes that much of the pressure on the countryside results from demands generated in towns, and identifies some of the problems associated with the quality of housing in urban areas. The Government must take those points seriously, and I hope that they will do so, particularly in the context of the assisted area and urban aid programmes. I must say—I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Mr. Hawkins) agrees with me—that it is a disgrace that Blackpool, whose town centre has pockets of some of the highest unemployment in the north of England, receives no assistance whatever at a time when some far less deserving cases in the area are inundated with it.

The plan is also right to state that there would be less pressure for rural development if towns were more attractive to residents, developers and investors. That is in line with much of the Government's current thinking. My own concern about the issue has led me to look more closely at what is actually being planned. The integrity of our rural areas is of paramount importance: the countryside is an important resource for everyone, town and country dwellers alike. Once despoiled, a landscape is lost for a generation or more; farmland, once built on, is unlikely ever to be returned to agriculture.

The structure plan therefore rightly proposes putting land use policy on a more sustainable footing. It stresses the need to protect the rural environment—yet it proposes

*[Mr. Elletson]*

a staggering amount of development, based on thoroughly unconvincing statistics, which constitutes nothing less than an assault on Lancashire's countryside.

The county proposes that Lancashire's districts should allocate land for 66,000 new houses between 1991 and 2006. At present levels of density, that would require more than 6,000 acres—or 2,500 hectares—of land, much of which would be on green fields at the edges of towns and villages. Some of it would inevitably be on the few remaining open spaces in towns such as Blackpool, which is expected to provide some 4,000 extra houses at a rate of 270 units per year. In rural areas, the rate of development would be much higher.

I consider that level of development neither necessary nor sustainable. It is based on a projected population increase of 71,000 between 1991 and 2006, including a migratory element of 35,000. It also assumes a need to house growing numbers of smaller households in similar accommodation because of new social trends, such as greater longevity and the breakdown of traditional family relationships.

Those factors are bound to have an effect on population growth in the county, but I nevertheless believe that the county council is overstating its housing need. Official estimates of population and migratory change—in particular, those from the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys—are lower than the projections used by the county. That is not always the case in other areas. The OPCS calculates a population increase of only 48,700, with 28,300 net migrations; it also notes the falling birth rate, which the county fails to take into account.

Whatever the true figures, there is little doubt that the county is prepared to surrender green-field sites far too easily, and has not concentrated nearly enough attention on brown-field and recycled land. It is extraordinary that the plan should concentrate in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans), for example, on developing green-field sites around Poulton, without mentioning the possibilities of housing development around the former commercial docks in Fleetwood.

It is also true to say that the type of housing proposed in such areas—mostly three and four-bedroom detached houses on small plots—does not reflect what is likely to be a growing demand for a higher proportion of smaller, low-cost properties built at higher densities for individuals and single parents rather than families. That important issue needs to be examined again, not just by the county council and local authorities but, in a wider context, by the Government. I hope that in the not too distant future the Environment Select Committee may be able to examine it, too; I certainly feel that it should be dealt with more fully in planning guidance.

I also believe that the Government should give much more consideration to the problems associated with migration from metropolitan areas, and the extent to which shire counties such as Lancashire are expected to plan for them. After all, such migrations are a sign of deteriorating quality of life in the cities: they show that life in the cities is becoming less and less attractive to ordinary people. In such circumstances, planned over-provision of land for housing by a county such as Lancashire simply fuels demand; it sends the wrong signals to people in general and developers in particular.

As we all know, the developer is much more likely to focus on areas of greatest demand, where the cost of land is lowest and the market rate for house prices is highest. We should give a much clearer signal to local authorities not to allocate precious land for housing simply to accommodate migration from metropolitan areas as a result of failure to satisfy the expectations of city dwellers in regard to their environment and quality of life.

The other main issue dealt with in the plan is transport. Much of what it says is good. It recognises the problems associated with increased car use. It suggests that there could be an extra 150,000 cars on Lancashire's roads by 2006—a truly horrifying statistic. It rightly emphasises the importance of public transport and the need to site development to reduce dependence on private cars, as well as the importance of traffic calming and management schemes and encouraging simpler forms of travel such as cycling and walking. All those initiatives are good, and the plan is right to concentrate on them. However, it also proposes a significant number of new road projects.

Those projects include what the plan calls a strategic route linking Lancashire with west Yorkshire and the Humber ports, which would mean an extension of the M65 beyond Colne. It also proposes 23 other road schemes. I shall not go into the details of every scheme, but that level of road building suggests a slightly less than "green" approach, to say the least. Some of the proposed schemes would have a severe impact on sites of special scientific interest, special protection areas and Ramsar and county heritage sites.

I believe that the county council is making a fundamental mistake in trying to solve traffic problems rather than transport problems. It also blandly assumes a direct correlation between road building and economic growth. The reality, as I am sure my hon. Friends will agree, is much more complex: sometimes that is the case, and sometimes it is not. Before we commit ourselves to such a vast increase in planned road building, we should be sure of the overall net benefits. The structure plan does little more than guess at those; nor does it estimate the amount of extra traffic that is likely to be generated by such a huge volume of road building.

In fact, most of those road schemes will not ultimately solve traffic problems. They will make them worse. In many instances, they will actually induce increases in traffic, with all the consequences that that will entail in terms of pollution, global warming and reduced quality of life. There is no doubt that in many instances the proposed road construction will seriously damage the environment and countryside and that will be widely resented by local people.

I genuinely welcome much of what the structure plan says about the development of alternative forms of transport, and particularly the emphasis on Blackpool's unique tram system, which has the potential to be developed as a light rail network for the Fylde. I know that many of my hon. Friends are keen on that idea and it should receive the closest possible attention both from local authorities and from the Government. I also welcome the plan's observations about the importance of Blackpool airport, which still has potential for significant expansion of great economic benefit to the whole of the Fylde.

I am concerned, however, about the structure plan's proposal for a massive new rail freight and regional business centre on a green-field site in South Ribble, despite the existence of suitable sites elsewhere. The

proposal involves the unnecessary development of a green-field site and will undermine efforts to regenerate derelict sites in urban areas.

All these issues lead to general concerns, one of which relates to the planning process itself. How should the county structure plan fit into the broader framework of national objectives and regional planning? The Lancashire structure plan is being produced outside the context of regional planning and without regard to the general direction of recent Government planning policy guidance. The deposit edition of the structure plan was written before publication of the consultation draft of the Government's regional planning guidance for the North West. That seems very odd. In Lancashire, so far as I am aware, the chicken does not usually come before the egg; however, it appears to have done so on this occasion.

What is the point of producing regional planning guidance if it does not form the basis of county structure plans and if its assumptions are not accepted by county planners, as clearly in this case—particularly with regard to housing—they are not? There seems little point in employing a large number of civil servants to produce plans in Manchester if those plans are simply ignored by an even larger number of county planning officials in Preston. It is little wonder that our planning objectives sometimes appear confused and contradictory.

The structure plan also illustrates another major environmental concern about land use designations. Essentially, we must ask ourselves what price we put on the environmental landscape value of different parts of the countryside. Throughout Lancashire there are valuable landscape and amenity areas with widely differing characteristics which are outside the boundaries of national designations such as green belt land and areas of outstanding natural beauty.

The boundaries of an area of outstanding natural beauty are entirely arbitrary, and it cannot be argued that all land outside those boundaries is of lesser landscape value. Lancashire is full of examples of some of the most beautiful countryside in England, much of it in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans). Much of that land is outside the boundaries of areas of outstanding natural beauty and is therefore without the protection that that designation affords.

I do not believe that the structure plan acknowledges the importance of differing characteristics and the relative values of landscapes. The Government need to give much clearer guidance in this area. There is much more fundamental concern about the Government's response to the threat to the countryside, and I am sure that it is an issue about which the Government, the Secretary of State and Ministers are deeply concerned.

There are two ways in which the Government can respond to the threat: first, through the planning system and, secondly, through measures to tackle the problem where it can be most readily solved—in the towns. The marriage between environmental objectives and the planning system has hardly been a whirlwind elopement. The planning system has begun to acknowledge the enormous pressures on the countryside and the damage that that has caused.

Recent planning policy guidance for town centres and for out-of-town retail developments, for instance, have begun to place a greater onus on developers. I believe that that trend should be extended, so that the onus is on all developers, not just retailers, to prove that their proposals will not harm the local environment or substantially damage the character of the countryside. National planning guidance should seek to play a much greater role in influencing the type, character and design of housing and industrial development in or at the edges of the countryside.

There must also be a clear presumption that rural land should not be released for development if suitable urban or infill sites exist elsewhere. The Government are rightly concerned about the vitality and viability of our town centres. It is the state of many of our towns which, after all, has caused such overwhelming pressures to be placed on the countryside. If our towns become places of ugliness and despair, where crime and vandalism are rife, it is inevitable that people will seek to leave them and move to the countryside.

Other countries—particularly Germany—have addressed the problem and ensured that town centres are vibrant places in which people want to live. We must make towns popular and attractive places again, not only by loading the planning system in their favour but by ensuring that we maximise grants and incentives for inner urban and brown-field development and regeneration. That is the only way to realise the full potential of our towns and cities and restore them to their former glory. It is also the only sure long-term way to protect the countryside so we can pass on our magnificent rural heritage unspoilt to our children.

The next few years will show that this issue, as illustrated by the Lancashire structure plan, is the most important environmental challenge facing this country. I will end by quoting a few more words of poetry, from "The Deserted Village" written by Oliver Goldsmith some 200 years ago. I hope that this will inspire the Minister to ensure that Goldsmith's nightmare vision does not become a reality:

> "Even now the devastation has begun,
> and half the business of destruction done,
> even now, me thinks as pondering here I stand,
> I see the rural virtues leave the land".

Unless we determine resolutely to defend our countryside, we shall bequeath a legacy of desolation, drabness, concrete and tyres to future generations.

11.55 am

**Mr. Peter L. Pike** (Burnley): When I saw that the hon. Member for Blackpool, North (Mr. Elletson) had been granted this debate, I wondered what line he would pursue. Like other Conservative Members, he has criticised Lancashire county council but, as a former county councillor himself, he is not quite as hostile to the council as some other Conservative Members.

I share the view of the majority of Lancashire Members of Parliament that we would have preferred a unitary system of local government for Lancashire, rather than the shire county, but I have never attacked the county council because I recognise the good work that it has done.

I found it strange that the hon. Member for Blackpool, South (Mr. Hawkins) described Lancashire county council as an extremist left-wing county council. I believe that it could be described as a moderate, sensible, progressive or positive county council, because it has tried to address the problems facing Lancashire since Labour took majority control for the first time under the present structure of local government in 1981.

*[Mr. Peter L. Pike]*

The hon. Member for Blackpool, North referred to VE day. I can remember VE day as I was evacuated to Burnley at the time of the V1s and V2s. I can remember having a bonfire just opposite where my grandmother lived in Burnley, and I also remember that that weekend was the first time I ever went to Blackpool. Lancashire is now very different from the Lancashire that existed during the war, and I have no doubt that local government—the boroughs, the former county borough councils or the county councils—has played a positive part in that.

One of the major changes in Lancashire has been in its industries. Burnley was dependent on coal mining and cotton, but coal has completely gone and cotton has almost gone from the whole county. When I was a young boy, I did not believe that the sun ever shone in Burnley. I never saw blue sky or the sun—even in summer—because of the pall of smoke over the town. Local government has played a role in changing that.

Under the structure plan, local government is showing how it believes Lancashire should address the problems that will face the county in the rapidly approaching next century.

I agreed with much of what the hon. Member for Blackpool, North said, but I fear that if restrictions and restraints were drawn round Lancashire, as he suggested, it could not attract industry, provide employment and survive in the 21st century.

The hon. Member for Blackpool, North mentioned the M65, and I have always been a supporter of that road, which was originally called the Calder valley motorway. At present, a motorway goes from Blackburn to Colne—many local people call it the motorway from Tesco to Asda because it ends in a field and starts in a nonsensical place—and it is outrageous that we still do not have connections to the M6 and M61.

I recognise that people have the right to protest, which they have done and action has been taken against them. I have no doubt that if we want investment, jobs and people to create wealth, so that towns in east Lancashire such as Burnley and Blackburn survive, we must have those connections to the motorways. When people are considering investing they always ask about the communications and whether they can get their goods away from Burnley if they open a factory in the town. Communications are the key.

The M65 has been debated and argued about on many occasions. It was agreed that it should be reinstated in the roads scheme and is to go ahead. I look forward to the day when the westwards extension to the M6 and M61 is open and benefiting the people of my area. I accept that the argument for going eastwards into Yorkshire is very different. I support that proposal and make no apologies for doing so. I always support environmental causes, but one has to weigh the environmental advantages and economic benefits of motorways, as well as the disadvantages. There still needs to be a debate on that issue; I would not necessarily share the view of the hon. Member for Blackpool, North on that.

In referring to the other 23 roads and the M65, the hon. Member for Blackpool, North implied that the county council is obsessed with roads rather than other transport issues, which is misleading. The county council has supported rail development, electrification and improvement and wants more investment in our rail system. Opposition Members do not believe that privatisation will help to achieve those improvements—Conservative Members will probably disagree. The railways should remain in the public sector and investment should be made.

The hon. Member for Blackpool, North failed to mention the tragic loss of the InterCity trains to Blackpool, although he must recognise that it is a loss. I am sure that, like me, he recognises that, if the Blackpool line were electrified through to Manchester, it would make it much easier for electrified InterCity trains to continue to Blackpool. I am sure that we would get unanimity on that view, as it is something that we all want, and the county council would certainly support it.

The county council strongly supports Manchester airport and the second runway proposal. It recognises, however, and has never pretended otherwise, the case for development and progress at Liverpool, if the investment could be made on its merits.

**Mr. Keith Mans** (Wyre): What about Blackpool?

**Mr. Pike:** The county council has always said that three airports serve the north-west, with Blackpool being the third. Manchester is a major international airport and there is no doubt that it will be developed.

The people of Lancashire will express their view of the Conservative party's policies on many of the issues in the elections tomorrow. I am sure that I will be much happier about the election results than Conservative Members, or the Liberals, who are not represented in this debate.

It is somewhat strange that the debate should take place today because, as hon. Members representing Lancashire will know, consultation on the Lancashire structure plan is taking place in the Dunkenhalgh hotel at Clayton-le-Moors this week. It started yesterday. Mr. Philip Critchley CB, is acting as chairman of the panel and the planning inspector has appointed Mr. Ernest Smith as the second member of the panel.

I do not know how many hon. Members responded to the original consultation on the structure plan. I certainly did so and I am sure that others who responded will have received a similar letter to one sent to me, which said that I would not be invited to take part in the public consultation but that my views would be taken into account. The county is going about the plan in the right way, has allowed people to put their views and is examining the issues that are the subject of the debate.

Among the subjects to be examined during the consultation are the county road network, urban transport, which certainly covers public transport, the trans-Pennine strategic route and green belts, to which the hon. Member for Blackpool, North referred—I accept that the latter is very important, as we do not want the green areas of Lancashire to be totally eroded. The list of subjects under examination also includes regional business location, development in central, north and east Lancashire and in the countryside, minerals and waste.

The last two are of great importance. Waste regulation is one of the subjects affected by the Environment Bill, which is in Committee at present. I support the view that waste regulation should be taken over by the environment protection agency. That is not a criticism of Lancashire county council, but a view that I reached while serving

on the Select Committee on the Environment some years ago, because I do not believe that one can be a poacher and a gamekeeper.

It is interesting that environmental issues in Lancashire, and the way in which the plan has been considered, have been recognised in Europe and internationally as an example to local government. The new Lancashire county structure plan, "Greening the Red Rose County", is one of the first in the country to be based on a strategy for sustainable development. The county council's pioneering environmental work has achieved European and global recognition. The pioneering green audit of Lancashire was announced at the Rio summit as one of the top 25 local environmental initiatives worldwide. In April, the European Commission presented the county council with one of Europe's most prestigious environmental awards for its green audit, environmental action plan and structure plan, which are all models of sustainable development for others to follow. With Lyon, it won joint first prize in the EC-sponsored European urban and regional town planning awards. The judges commended it very highly and it is important that we recognise that.

As I said, minerals are one of the subjects under discussion at the Dunkenhalgh hotel. As I have told the county council time after time, it should oppose all plans for opencast extraction and the re-opening of former coal mines. In 1995, there is no case for extracting what, in most cases, is low-quality and poor-value coal. Secondly, all my experience is that when any such developments have taken place in my constituency, agreements on aspects of reinstatement work and environmental protection have not been observed. I hope that, within the plan, we will be firm and of the overriding view that we should not approve such development.

Lancashire county council has suggested a sensible and balanced approach and has considered the needs of a county in which we can live, be educated and provided with all the services and all the other things that make for a normal life. The plan is balanced and the council has made a fair judgment of the environmental implications. I do not necessarily agree with every item, but the council's approach is positive and sensible and will lead to a vibrant and successful Lancashire in the next century.

12.8 pm

**Sir Mark Lennox-Boyd** (Morecambe and Lunesdale): I congratulate the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) on his speech and on attending a debate that is clearly dominated by representatives of the Conservative party in Lancashire. We cannot fail to notice that the hon. Gentleman is the only Labour party representative from Lancashire in the Chamber. His colleagues have doubtless asked him to speak for them and I expect that Liberal Democrat representatives, who are so closely allied to the Labour party, have asked the hon. Gentleman to make their contribution as well.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, North (Mr. Elletson) on raising this debate. He speaks with the valuable experience of a former county councillor with great knowledge of, interest in and commitment to Lancashire. He has done the House a good service by giving us an opportunity to debate matters of concern. Many local government issues have national implications on which we all have strong views, and it is only right that we should deal with them in this way. I hope that we can have such a debate every year. If my hon. Friend pursues such a course of action, I shall certainly attend.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Sir Paul Beresford):** So shall I.

**Sir Mark Lennox-Boyd:** My hon. Friend the Minister will no doubt be elevated to other positions on the Front Bench and will not reply to a debate on this subject next year.

As so many of my hon. Friends wish to speak, I shall deal with just one aspect of the county structure plan: the western bypass, an important road in my constituency. This matter will loom large in the debate in county hall next week when the roads programme will be discussed. I started to press for the road when I first became a Member of Parliament 16 years ago. It was then called the M6 link. I noticed that the hon. Member for Burnley called it something else. Over the years, those great ideas tend to change names. One reason why the road is no longer called the M6 link in my constituency is that part of it—the Lancaster to Morecambe bypass, phase 1—has already been built. We now need to complete that first stage by building a link to the motorway. The two options are a western bypass, favoured by the county, and a northern bypass, favoured by others. I shall not discuss the merits of the arguments, which will be considered next week.

I am anxious that the road should be completed. It would be a county road and is currently the subject of an environmental impact assessment. The completed road would link Heysham port and industrial estate to the motorway network. I hope that I can persuade the Minister and my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, North that the road will be of great importance to the county. I hope to take a delegation of local business men to see the Department of Transport next week.

In considering the impact of roads on the environment, it should be recognised that the arguments go both ways. Some reasons for road building are environmentally and economically benign. I believe that the M6 link, as I shall call it, in its generic way satisfies those criteria. The port of Heysham in the heart of the town is a significant but greatly under-utilised asset which, under Sealink's ownership, is developing ever-increasing trade. Over the past 15 years, capacity has been doubled and new trade routes have been opened to Northern Ireland.

I hope that I am not over-optimistic in saying that the trade may develop still further on the back of the peace dividend, which we all hope will succeed in Northern Ireland, and there will be even more trade from the port of Heysham across the northern Irish sea. If that happens, it is unrealistic to envisage that trade continuing other than by means of motor vehicle on to the delivery systems of the United Kingdom. The inevitable increase in traffic pressure cannot be met without relieving the urban centres of Lancaster and Morecambe by completing the motorway link.

The second important and strategic reason why Heysham needs that link to the motorway system is that it has a long-standing industrial estate. A great ICI plant was there and an enormous amount of land is derelict. The city council owns many acres of land on the estate and has allocated the area to building a new industrial estate. It plans to reclaim derelict land and put industrial units in the area. It is environmentally beneficial that that

*[Sir Mark Lennox-Boyd]*

should be the location for new industry, which my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, North recognised will be needed.

We must clean up the area. If there is no incentive so to do, the area will not be cleaned up. We must provide sites for industry but we do not want to take new green-field sites for that purpose. That old green-field site has already been rendered derelict and is available to industry. It must be right to build industry in such areas. As the hon. Member for Burnley said, developers who wish to enter an area want to know when roads will be built as road communications are a significant factor in assessing whether to invest in that part of the north-west.

I shall not dwell at length on the third reason, but simply say that terrific stresses are caused in Lancaster and Morecambe by traffic demands on the area. Everyone who visits the city at rush hour and other hours of the day will know that that is so.

In his opening words, my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, North said that we should make town centres environmentally enjoyable places. I entirely agree. Lancaster is not my constituency but my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) could not be here this morning. I am sure that she wants cities such as Lancaster once more to be pleasant places in which to live. No one could dispute that Lancaster is not an environmentally pleasant place to live because of the enormous amount of traffic generated in the city centre. Traffic must be relieved in such areas. I am reliably informed that the completion of the western bypass or M6 link would relieve traffic that comes through Lancaster on its way to my constituency by some 31 per cent. and would end some of that painful congestion.

It is a national policy to move away from road building. I subscribe to that general principle as I do not want our countryside to be destroyed, but that objective has not been as openly and clearly defined to the House as I should like. I hope that, in his reply, my hon. Friend the Minister can give us a more precise idea about it. Any policy to move away from the sort of road building that occurred in the post-war period must be qualified in many areas. I can think of only two, but they are particularly germane to the road that I am discussing. The policy should be qualified by recognising that we must, none the less, build roads where congestion has become intolerable. We must have a policy that deals with such congestion. It is no use making the bald statement that we shall build no more roads if we have no policy to deal with appalling congestion.

One aspect of that policy is to build a road as, in some cases, it would be good for the environment to do so. I accept the proposition that we should build no more strategic motorways across the country and that people should travel by rail or public transport, but it is absurd to say that we do not need roads if they could relieve appalling congestion.

That criterion must apply to the road that I am discussing. I recognise that this is a complicated matter and that, every time a road is built, road usage increases, but we still need a policy on congestion.

Roads that have already been started must be completed. Phase 1 of the Heysham to Morecambe road has already been completed and phase 2 would link that road to the motorway. If we do not complete phase 2, we shall invalidate and fail to take advantage of the potential benefits of phase 1. This road goes virtually nowhere. It is by no means over-utilised, so we must build on the investment in phase 1 by completing phase 2.

Both those qualifications apply to the road about which I am speaking and I look forward to the comments of my hon. Friend the Minister in due course.

12.19 pm

**Mr. Keith Mans** (Wyre): I am grateful to have the opportunity to say a few words in this excellent debate. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, North (Mr. Elletson) on obtaining the debate and I identify myself with his remarks, which he made based on his deep knowledge of Lancashire over many decades and that of his family over many centuries.

I am a reasonably recent immigrant to Lancashire, but, as a result of my experience elsewhere on planning committees and local councils, I am convinced of the importance of local and structure plans. Certainty is needed to get the planning process moving in the right direction and to allow people to plan for the future. But if we have such plans—my remarks relate particularly to Lancashire county council's structure plan—they must be based on accurate data.

One of the most worrying assumptions for the coming decade in the Lancashire county structure plan is the inflow of population to my borough at a rate of about 850 people a year. Therefore, we should look closer at whether such assumptions are correct. I do not think that they are, in which case all the other assumptions concerning housing are inaccurate. We shall be driving forward a process which is almost a self-fulfilling prophecy. Because one builds the houses, people will be encouraged to live in Lancashire when, without such assumptions in the first place, there would probably be a much better balance involving people in the county, people coming in and the amount of housing and green belt.

It is suggested that my borough will have 6,000 more houses in the next 10 years. I believe that that is totally wrong. It is a large increase. As my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, North said, it is a 66,000 increase across the county. One tenth of those new houses in Lancashire will be built in the borough of Wyre.

My borough council has looked closely at the figures and it says:

"On the basis of the socio-economic trends, the borough council proposes to challenge these assumptions. Perhaps more importantly"—

I emphasise this—

"the borough council does not view the continuation or encouragement of development on such a scale as being desirable because it would seriously compromise environmental and other legitimate planning objectives."

If I have a criticism of the Lancashire county structure plan in relation to housing, it is that it has not taken into account those other factors.

If we analyse the present situation, we do not see in Lancashire, and particularly in Wyre, a huge increase in house prices. Therefore, there is no evidence on the ground that there are not enough houses. Indeed, the opposite happens. My hon. Friend mentioned Fleetwood. For the past four or five years a development site next to the old commercial dock could have been used for

residential development, but no one has come along to build houses on it and, most recently, some of the land has been taken for retail space.

If there is a pent-up demand for houses, why has that development not gone ahead? My real point is that we should look less at the predictions of experts at county hall of what will happen to the population in Lancashire during the coming years and much more closely at what is happening on the ground where sites are available but have not been taken up.

**Mr. Pike:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Mans:** I am afraid that I cannot because I have only a couple of minutes.

I am convinced that the right way forward is for us to concentrate our developments in towns, as has been said, and ensure that we revitalise towns such as Fleetwood and Lancaster rather than gobbling up green belt around towns such as Garstang and Poulton-le-Fylde and villages such as Knott End, Preesall and Pilling. There is a suggestion that 60 acres adjacent to Knott End should be used for 600 new houses which would increase the village's population by 50 per cent. That would change the character of that village. There is no doubt that that would happen across the borough and the county if the county assumptions on the increase in population during the next 10 years were to be realised. That is unacceptable.

There is much good in the document on the greening of Lancashire, although I rather agree with my hon. Friend that in many ways it could be described as the browning of the county. What is important is that we concentrate on urban areas and do not gobble up any more green belt.

I have been involved in planning and local government for many years and the one thing that is striking is the constant change in the guidance that comes out of the Department of the Environment. I am pleased that such guidance is now in tune with what I have been saying. I am convinced that certainty and encouragement to developers to develop brown lands within towns, rather than green belt around towns, will be to the benefit of communities and have a useful on-going effect because the lack of development will mean a reduction in transport and other needs.

I sincerely hope that the public inquiry into the structure plan comes up with the sort of proposals that my hon. Friends and I have articulated this morning.

12.26 pm

**Mr. Nick Hawkins** (Blackpool, South): I am delighted to have an opportunity to speak in the debate. I shall be brief so that my hon. Friends can contribute. It is a matter of enormous pleasure to all my hon. Friends that my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, North (Mr. Elletson) has obtained this important debate. I echo the remarks that have been made about his distinguished previous service as a Lancashire county councillor for the Wyreside ward. I think that I am right in recalling that he was at that time, by some distance, the youngest Lancashire county councillor and one of the youngest ever to have served on the county council. I have no doubt that the experience that he gained during his time as a Lancashire county councillor has been of enormous importance to him.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) touched on the great historic tradition of the family of my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, North. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre, unfortunately I do not have that benefit. I am a more recent arrival in Lancashire, but my wife's family has been in Lancashire for generations. In the few years that I have had the honour to represent Blackpool, South, I have acquired some knowledge of some of the problems that arise as a result of the peculiar approach of Lancashire county council, under its current leadership, to these matters. In the short time available, I want to touch briefly on one or two issues that I think are particularly important.

My hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, North stressed the crucial importance of getting planning policy right by basing it on accurate statistics. I very much share his disbelief, and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre, in the projected figures for the incoming population in the next few years. As has been said, if they are wrong, the planning policies are wrong. I am sure that we shall not see a massive influx of population into Lancashire and that, therefore, we should not be seeing vast amounts of building.

My constituency is entirely urban. I want proper housing policies to exist which develop existing urban land with good-quality housing. As my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, North rightly said, unfortunately there are areas of great deprivation in his constituency and mine. Those are the areas where there needs to be new building. We need rejuvenation of the town centres, not more despoliation of the countryside.

I am lucky enough to come from a farming family, and I have seen the destruction of the countryside in other regions. I do not want to see any more of it in Lancashire. Let the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) and Labour members of Lancashire county council be in no doubt that, if the daft policy of building vast numbers of new houses is carried through by that council's Labour leadership, they will be blamed by future generations and the people of Lancashire will never forgive or forget that the Labour party came up with that policy.

The problem with the council's Labour leadership is that it thinks that, by producing glossy reports and using titles such as "Green in the Red Rose County", people will not bother to read them and will think that the council believes in green environmental policies because it says so on the cover. I tell the hon. Gentleman and Labour Lancashire county councillors that people are wiser than that; they do read the contents.

I should like to draw attention in particular to another bulky and glossy report on environmental issues recently produced by Lancashire county council's Labour leadership. It was launched at an expensive reception at the Cafe Royal in the presence of His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales. It is called "Public Perceptions and Sustainability in Lancashire". It was produced with taxpayers' money—the people of Lancashire's money. Those people would be angry if they were aware that the bulk of that glossy report—pages 24 to 70, not including the introduction and the appendices—contained vernacular quotations from focus groups. Under the heading "Sustainability and Environment", we have such quotes as:

"Who would actually come up with this term? A speech writer. Political. A slogan. It's too long to be a slogan. Not catchy. Could be used on management courses. You are saying this is not catchy, it's a long word. Is it not catchy because it's too long or is it something else about it? It's quite a good word because when you think about it you know what it means."

*[Mr. Nick Hawkins]*

Is that the sort of nonsense that the people of Lancashire want their taxes spent on? There are 40 to 50 pages of such rubbish and they cost Lancashire taxpayers a lot of money. Lancashire county council should have a better structure plan and stop wasting taxpayers' money on that sort of thing.

I should touch on a couple of other issues. I agree on one point made by the hon. Member for Burnley. It is crucial that we have electrification of the rail link to Blackpool and that we have proper public transport services. My hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, North rightly says that great scope exists to develop the Blackpool tramway system into a proper light rail system. Plans were recently made by one of our local tourism entrepreneurs, Mr. Michael Taylor, to reopen the Poulton-Fleetwood rail link, which I strongly support and from which we would benefit.

I agree with the concern expressed by my hon. Friend about the development of a green-field site in South Ribble for a rail terminal. We need a rail terminal, but we do not want it on a green-field site. I have no doubt that my hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside will have his own views on that.

I agree that we need to safeguard areas of outstanding natural beauty much better, and to pay much closer attention to the important contribution that farmers make to the environment throughout Lancashire. Coming from a farming family, I know only too well that it is farmers who have looked after the British countryside. The problem with the Labour leadership of Lancashire county council is that it almost never listens to farmers. That is why farmers have the sense to support the Conservative party and Government.

Some road developments in the county are good. Yesterday, I attended the opening in my constituency of the new Squire's gate link road, 50 per cent. of which was funded by the Government as a result of my lobbying the then Minister with responsibility for roads, my hon. Friend the Member for Lincoln (Sir K. Carlisle).

The Labour party and, in particular, the Labour leadership of Lancashire county council should be aware of one more piece of poetry from the immortal Robert Burns, who wrote:

"O wad some Pow'r the giftie gie us
To see oursels as others see us!"

12.34 pm

**Mr. Den Dover** (Chorley): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, North (Mr. Elletson) on securing today's debate. Structure plans map out the future of a county for many years ahead. Too often, we leave it to the last minute and then start complaining when it is far too late.

The previous version of the structure plan showed that the bulk of development in the county would take place in what is called central Lancashire. On closer examination, one saw that it referred to the area just around Chorley, Leyland and Preston to the south of the river. That is only a small portion of the county. As we can see from the document, there have been enormous growth rates in my region of Chorley—it has by far the largest urban development rate in the county.

As other hon. Members have said, the number of houses forecast for the next 15 years is far too large. On page 33 of the document, the county council refers to Chorley, saying that it will ensure that the rate of build is below that of market trends and requirements; but when one turns to the actual figures, there is no reduction in the current rate, which has been the largest in the county. That is not good enough. We should ensure that we respond to market trends and do not over-build housing.

In the Chorley, Leyland and Preston area, far too many estates are the aftermath of the actions of the Central Lancashire development corporation. That ended some nine years ago. The Labour Government were trying to bend the process and ensure that all housing was rented. As soon as the Conservative Government came to power in 1979, they stopped that. They allowed only housing for sale to be built. I appreciate that measure and the closure of plans for the central Lancashire new town. Housing trends must be strictly, and only, in line with local people's requirements. We do not want massive immigration, about which hon. Members spoke this morning.

The motorway service areas of Charnock Richard on the M6 and Rivington on the M61 are in my constituency. I am delighted that they are referred to in the development plan, but I would like some transport link route towards Chorley at Charnock Richard. I pay tribute to those farsighted people who on the A43 junction of the M1 near Rothersthorpe have built a superb transport link by the service station. I hope that we can look forward to such a link at Charnock Richard.

I welcome very much the intention to have railway stations rebuilt at Coppull and Euxton, the village in my constituency where I live. That is good news, but, with full resources, it has taken the county council and British Rail three or four years to introduce disabled access to platforms at Parbold, one of the villages that I represent. We need a faster rate of growth and we need those railway stations to be built in the next few years if they are going to make sense in terms of transport links.

12.37 pm

**Mr. Nigel Evans** (Ribble Valley): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member or Blackpool, North (Mr. Elletson) on his success in securing the debate. It is an important debate for all of us who live in and work on behalf of the people of Lancashire. I was going to quote from three poems this morning, but they have all been used by other hon. Members, so I shall press on speedily and talk about how important the environment is in Lancashire and, especially, in the Ribble valley.

Like many other hon. Members, I was not born in the constituency that I represent, but I am proud to live in the Ribble valley and I am passionate about wanting to preserve that region. Many people will know my constituency well. It attracts many tourists. When I first came to the Ribble Valley, I lived in Downham, a small, superbly managed village owned almost in its entirety by Lord Clitheroe. Dominating one end of the village is Pendle hill. At the other end, one has the Assheton Arms and the church. From that church, one has a most splendid view over the whole of Downham.

Downham was the village where the film "Whistle Down the Wind" was made in 1961, with Alan Bates and Hayley Mills. I am sure that many people remember that

film, which is a classic of its time. The surprising thing is that the village has not altered at all in the 30-odd years since that film was made.

It is a superb region. It is preserved, but not fossilised. It is a warm community. In my constituency, I have many villages such as Downham—I am loth to mention them just in case I miss some out—which are superb and attract many visitors. The problem is that the structure plan is a threat and a warning to those villages. It aims to target a certain area in my constituency—a path stretching from one side of it to the other, which is referred to as a "corridor". It would be a corridor of concrete, and would destroy the peace and quiet and the distinct character of many of the villages.

I know that the cry will go up, "It is only one more green field," but then, there will be "only" another green field, and then one more. Will that continue until there is only one green field left? We must do something about it now. We have the area of outstanding natural beauty, which constitutes 70 per cent. of my constituency, but many areas outside it are equally beautiful, and they should be protected and guarded, too.

That is not a case of "not in my back yard", because we have already given way to much development in the Ribble valley. Clitheroe, Barrow, Whalley, Ribchester, Longridge and many more of my villages have succumbed to some development already. We need to protect the distinct character of the villages so that the Ribble valley's front garden does not become Blackburn's or Preston's back yard, so that one cannot distinguish between some of the villages and the sprawl that would cover many of the areas to the south and west.

I am not against all development. I fully support many developments based on former large institutions—acceptable developments on the footprints of existing buildings. I have already supported one such development in Brockhall, and I shall support another in Calderstones. But that development must take place only on the footprint of the hospital and not on any of the green-field sites around it. Whittingham hospital is another site where development should be allowed on the footprint of the buildings but not on the surrounding green-field sites.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Chorley (Mr. Dover), I believe that Lancashire county council has got the number of people in our area, and therefore the number of houses needed, totally wrong. The figures do not equate. Given the number of people who occupy the houses now, and the number we think will want to live in our area up to the year 2006, we should be thinking in terms of 15,000 houses, not 66,000. Such a move would release a lot of the pressure on the area.

There is much more that I wanted to say, but I shall finish now. I agree with much of what my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, North said about regenerating the towns and cities so that people will want to live there. That would relieve the pressure on the villages.

I do not want future generations to look back on old photographs of our green and pleasant land and have to ponder why we let it go. It is not ours to let go; we are the trustees for future generations. The countryside is their inheritance; it is not for our consumption. How green is my valley? It is very green—all shades of green—and flooding it with concrete will kill it for ever. We must not allow that to happen.

12.42 pm

**Mr. Keith Vaz** (Leicester, East): I, too, begin by congratulating the hon. Member for Blackpool, North (Mr. Elletson) on securing the debate. I feel rather ashamed that I did not consult the "Oxford Book of English Verse" or the "Oxford Book of Films" so that I could refer to suitable titles and poems, and I wait with great interest to see whether the Minister has his own stock of poems ready to read out—in appropriate accents, of course.

I am delighted to see so many Lancashire Members here, especially my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike). Another Lancashire Member, my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), has asked me to pass on his apologies, as he cannot attend; he very much wanted to participate in the debate.

I also take the opportunity to congratulate Gordon Johnson, the chief executive of Lancashire county council, and his officers and the members of the council, on their excellent work. Hon. Members have acknowledged that work and, although they have also criticised aspects of the plan, they have generally welcomed what it has said.

Being in local government over the past 10 years or so has not been an easy task, and I believe that Lancashire county council has done its best to provide decent services. As my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley said, the county council has been acknowledged as a pioneering authority in several respects. It is required by sections 30 and 32 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as amended by the Planning and Compensation Act 1991, to keep under review matters that might be expected to affect the development or planning of its area, and to update its structure plan.

The structure plan is therefore concerned with resolving major issues facing the county and identifying other issues. It covers the period from mid-1991 to mid-2006, and has four main functions. First, it establishes the level of development that must be provided for if the future needs of the county's population are to be adequately met, while ensuring that the resultant pattern of land use is both efficient in terms of use of resources, including the consumption of land and energy, and consistent with national and regional policy.

Secondly, the plan sets out the county council's long-term policies for development, use of land and traffic management, and provides a strategic framework for local planning and the control of development. Thirdly, it secures consistency between local plans for neighbouring areas within the county. Fourthly, it provides developers with initial and general guidance as to whether major proposals for new developments are likely to accord with the overall planning strategy for the county. That gives developers a strategic context in which to make investment decisions, by giving long-term guidance concerning, for example, the scale and location of population, housing and growth.

The structure plan is therefore concerned with identifying the very issues that hon. Members on both sides of the House have mentioned. It provides that context as a background for future investment and development decisions by both the public and the private sector throughout Lancashire as a whole, to achieve sustainable economic growth and environmental protection and to take the county forward into the 21st century.

*[Mr. Keith Vaz]*

My hon. Friend the Member for Burnley has mentioned the pioneering environmental work that the county council has done, and the European Community prize that it won, with the city of Lyon, for work that, in the words of one judge, showed a pioneering effort to provide sustainable development planning at a regional level.

My hon. Friend did not have time today, and nor have I, to mention the level of jobs and investment that the county council has brought into the area, although I can mention some examples. The council and its economic development agency have brought a clear strategic focus to bear on the county's economic needs. Over the past decade, 22,000 jobs and training places have been created by Lancashire Enterprises, which has invested £15 million in more than 200 small and medium enterprises.

Other notable achievements, as I am sure the House is aware, include the rescue of Leyland Trucks, which is now a prospering manufacturing centre of excellence, the regeneration of the Leeds-Liverpool canal corridor, which has levered in investment of £80 million, and the help for Lancashire's seaside resorts, including Blackpool. I am sorry that the hon. Members for Blackpool, North and for Blackpool, South (Mr. Hawkins) did not take the opportunity to thank the council for that work.

**Mr. Hawkins:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Vaz:** No, I shall not give way. The Opposition have been generous to Conservative Members, and have given them all an opportunity to participate in the debate. The Minister also wants to speak, and it would not be right for me to give way when I have several more points to make on behalf of the Opposition.

The hon. Member for Blackpool, North, as we heard, was a member of the county council for four years, and he had several things to say. Echoing Larkin, he chose to speak for England and to describe the despoiling of the countryside. However, I know that he has participated in previous planning debates, so he ought to know that the enormous difficulties with planning have been caused by the Government's guidance.

As the Minister announced during a recent debate on retail planning, a review has been undertaken of PPG6 and PPG13 precisely because the Government's guidance was not clear. On other occasions, the hon. Gentleman spoke of the need to invest in town and city centres. He was right to do so, but the reason why that investment has not happened over the past 16 years is that Government planning policy has not been clear. That is why so many out-of-town developments have emerged in so many parts of the country—and, indeed, why his own town centre is threatened by such developments. He is right to say to the Minister that it is extremely important that the Government should come up with clear guidance on out-of-town developments.

The hon. Gentleman also mentioned the fact that so many people—5 million in four years—have left our major towns and cities in Britain. Over the past few years, they have left our towns and cities in such great numbers because the Government have failed to invest in our towns and city centres. Even the new policy of the single regeneration budget has not provided the necessary means by which local authorities and the public and private sector can work together to put forward bids to regenerate the town centres. We need to look at the way in which our urban areas are run. We need to ensure that there is proper investment and that local councils are aware of the importance of town centre management. That is the only way in which we shall obtain effective and sustainable growth in our town and city centres.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned transport—a subject mentioned by other Conservative Members as well as my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley. Without an effective and efficient transport system which does not require the public to pay vast amounts of money to travel on it, we shall never achieve sustainable towns and city centres. We fully support the hon. Gentleman's desire to see Blackpool airport developed. He will know that the structure plan contains specific points in support of that proposal.

The hon. Member for Morecambe and Lunesdale (Sir M. Lennox-Boyd) supports the roads that help his constituents but does not support the roads that the hon. Member for Blackpool, North supports. I do not intend to intrude on the private or public grief of Conservative Members, but the county council has advanced proposals that it believes will alleviate the distress and anxiety caused to many thousands of people in the local area. It has advanced the proposals that it believes will best meet the needs of local areas.

The hon. Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) said that he believed that local plans and structure plans should provide certainty. He is right. But that is precisely what is not provided at present. That is why the Labour party has instituted a review into the planning process. Unless there is certainty, the private sector and local authorities cannot plan sufficiently and properly. That is why we believe that planning guidance should be considered extremely carefully by Ministers and civil servants before it is issued. There is no point in issuing guidance, then coming to the House and telling the public and private sector that unfortunately the guidance will have to be withdrawn and the ministerial speech will have to be taken as the best example of planning policy. That is clearly not sufficient and the problem must be seriously addressed.

The hon. Member for Blackpool, South talked about the need for rejuvenation of town centres. He has said that before and he knows where the blame lies—clearly with the Government's failure to invest in our towns and city centres. The new single regeneration budget does not provide the means to deal with the problem.

The hon. Member for Blackpool, South spoilt his contribution by his attack on the leadership of the county council. I throw him a challenge and invite him to let me show the glossy brochures sent to us by Ministers of the Crown. We can compare them with what Lancashire county council has produced to see whether Lancashire has gone over the top in providing information. All local authorities should provide information and whether it is glossy or not is not a serious political point.

The hon. Members for Chorley (Mr. Dover) and for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans) also spoke.

My hon. Friend the Member for Burnley said that he believed that the structure plan provided a sensible and balanced approach. He also said, which may sound obvious, that a consultation process is taking place. I urge each of the Conservative Members and their local councils to participate in that consultation process. If the evidence given to the public inquiry and the consultation

process is as good and the points are as serious as most of the points made today, that will help Lancashire county council and the people of Lancashire to fashion a structure plan that will be able to provide a basis for the development of Lancashire into the next century.

12.54 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Sir Paul Beresford):** I must add my congratulations to my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, North (Mr. Elletson) on today's debate. We have received much good advice and heard some interesting points. As ever, he never misses an opportunity to put in a bid for more finance for his area.

My hon. Friends the Members for Morecambe and Lunesdale (Sir M. Lennox-Boyd), for Wyre (Mr. Mans), for Blackpool, South (Mr. Hawkins), for Chorley (Mr. Dover) and for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans) also contributed to the debate. Even with the contribution of the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike), it felt as though we were listening to a family debate. There was plenty of excellent advice, particularly for the county council. The comments of the hon. Member for Burnley made me feel young—certainly in the way in which he approaches privatisation and the benefits that it will bring.

The hon. Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) blamed the Government for the failure of Labour councils in the inner cities, which is to be blind beyond belief. One has only to walk across the river to see the incompetence in London and the way in which that is carried through to the inner cities up and down the country. It is not a case of investment, which is being made. The destruction of the inner cities by Labour councils is beyond belief. The only reason why we are starting to make some progress is that the Conservative Government have had the gumption to move in and utilise partnerships to bring in the private sector and bring about a change in the ethos of inner cities which will give us much greater hope of doing something in terms of the countryside and attracting people back into the inner cities.

We have been discussing Lancashire, particularly its new structure plan, which is the subject of a public examination that started yesterday and is programmed to run until the end of the month. Therefore, as noted by my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, North, the timing is delicate and it is difficult for me to do more than comment in broad outline.

The county has appointed a panel to carry out the examination in public. It has the job of considering the key issues and objections and to make recommendations to the county council in the light of them. The Lancashire structure plan is an essential component in the overall planning blueprint that will take the north-west of England into the 21st century. But it is only one element: the plan must comply with national policies, which are reflected in the planning policy guidance notes and regional planning guidance.

I should like to draw my hon. Friends' attention to three recent initiatives which seek to enhance and safeguard the quality of the environment of town and country. First, I should like to refer to the recently revised guidance note on green belts, PPG2. The Government continue to attach great importance to green belts. They have been an essential part of planning policy for four decades and are intended to serve several purposes, including separating towns and villages and restraining encroachment on the countryside. The purposes of the green belt policy and the related development control policies set out in 1955 remain valid today with remarkably little alteration.

Secondly, of equal importance is the need to conserve and enhance the environment of town and country. In that respect, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has initiated a discussion on quality in town and country. That seeks to take a fresh look at our villages, towns and cities and asks how we can best safeguard their distinctive character and future viability—the essence of my hon. Friends' points.

Thirdly, the Government's intention to produce a rural White Paper was announced jointly by my right hon. Friends the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Secretary of State for the Environment last October. The rural White Paper will cover the full range of economic, social and environmental issues affecting today's countryside.

The regional context for Lancashire's new structure plan is provided by the Government's draft regional planning guidance for the north-west which was launched recently. The guidance is largely based on advice from the north-west regional association of local authorities in its document "Greener Growth". It outlines a framework for providing new homes and jobs, but emphasises that new development should be located to reduce the need to travel and should be well served by public transport. The emphasis is on sustainable growth in line with the thrust of our national policies—particularly those that I have just mentioned.

The guidance makes it clear that we are planning for prosperity and a region fit for the 21st century, with the aim of maximising the north-west's competitiveness and quality of life without damaging its magnificent heritage. With the next Conservative Government, we shall be able to continue that. We are looking for regeneration and sustainable economic development. We use those as the key watchwords.

Within Lancashire, the guidance proposes allowing for regeneration and modest development associated with the main self-contained towns along transport corridors. As my hon. Friends have emphasised, the county's agricultural land, landscape and natural environment are second to none. For example, Fylde and south-west Lancashire contain some of the best farming areas. We have the forest of Bowland, Morecambe bay and the Ribble estuary. I shall make no comment on green valleys.

The examination in public of the structure plan's proposals is now under way. We have had some excellent guidance and hints today from hon. Members on both sides of the House about the way in which we should approach the plan and move forward. I can assure my hon. Friends that the panel will consider fully all the issues—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris):** Order.

# Firearms

1 pm

**Mr. Terry Lewis** (Worsley): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise once again on the Adjournment the question of firearms. I make no apology for returning to the subject. As hon. Members will recall, I have brought to the attention of the House several events that have happened from time to time, of which the Minister is fully aware.

I am prompted today by the recent spate of firearms offences in the north-west. There was yet another theft from domestic premises in Salford only last week. The House will remember that I previously drew attention to the theft of eight hand guns held legally in premises in Greater Manchester. Three of those hand guns subsequently appeared at the scenes of crimes. Tragically, they resulted in three deaths and one serious wounding. That is sufficient reason for the House to turn its attention to blocking off as far as possible one source of weaponry from the criminal fraternity.

I accept that there are many routes by which criminals gain possession of firearms. I also accept that the majority of people who shoot for pleasure and sport are responsible people. However, as in many other walks of life, those who are irresponsible or less than careful tend to compromise the majority. It causes me a great deal of worry that insufficient attention has been given to depriving criminals of weaponry. The spate of incidents to which I shall refer is a truly frightening catalogue.

On Good Friday, a man was shot to death on the streets of Salford while riding his bike. The case has still to come to court. I believe that arrests have been made. The story on the streets is that he was a bouncer in a Manchester nightclub—there might well be a connection there; one does not know.

Since then, there has been yet another armed post office raid in Bolton. Following that, there was another attempted street assassination in Bolton. A man was gunned down while sitting in his car waiting outside a chip shop. Following that, there was yet another armed robbery in Salford in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor). A constituent of mine working in a building society was threatened with a weapon. All that took place within a radius of five miles from where I live. I do not live in the inner city. A little further afield, only yesterday, when children were playing in the streets in the warm spring sunshine, there was yet another armed fracas in Liverpool.

Such crimes and their frequency demand action on guns. Therefore, I call on Ministers to consider several measures that I shall suggest this morning.

As legally held weapons easily fall into criminal hands, new gun controls are necessary. I call on the Minister to consider a ban on the keeping of firearms in domestic premises in urban communities. I am aware of the Minister's farming connections. I am not talking about shotguns kept in farmhouses. I emphasise that I am deliberately talking about domestic premises in urban areas.

I make a clear demand to the Minister that there should be stronger sentencing for even the illegal possession of firearms. Leaving aside the use of them, mere possession should attract exemplary sentences. I would also give powers to the courts to confiscate weapons used in crime, whomsoever they belong to. I see the Minister frown, so let me explain.

One of the guns that was stolen a couple of years ago—one of the eight that was eventually used as forensic evidence in a trial—was returned to its rightful owner. I raised that issue on the Floor of the House at the time. If the owner was not sufficiently responsible, and was careless enough to have his weapon stolen in the first place, and his weapon was used to cause the heinous crime of which I speak—the gunning down of a young man who was going about his lawful business as a security guard—that gun should be melted down. I should like the Minister to consider that.

I should also like to see the introduction of a national firearms index. I believe that some senior police officers consider that that is a reasonable route to take. A national index would be used much as the log book for a motor car, to track the movement of firearms that are legally sold and transferred.

When I raised the storage of firearms in domestic premises some time ago, I received an irate letter from a gun dealer in Bolton. He made several points to me during a long correspondence. I suppose that, with our experience of dealing with the public, Members of Parliament quickly learn about people. I felt that there was something not quite right with the opinions that that legal, licensed gun dealer expressed. He resisted any idea of guns being indexed and sold with a log. That dealer is now serving a fairly long stretch in one of Her Majesty's establishments, for illegally transferring guns into the criminal fraternity.

It is now time for strict psychological testing of applicants for any gun licence. In a recent incident in my local pub, a young man with a loaded revolver en route to his home from his shooting club irresponsibly brandished the weapon about among the pub customers. He was arrested. The matter is sub judice, as it has yet to come to court, but that incident alone convinces me that the present vetting system is inadequate. If people on the face of it are responsible and use guns for sporting purposes, we should make absolutely certain that they have the right psychological attitude to using what are now very powerful weapons.

I shall keep my speech brief. My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) wants to make a speech from the Front Bench. I have made three or four sharp points. I have given the Minister what I hope were to him interesting examples of the cause of the problems. Therefore, I hope that he will offer some encouragement to people like me, who wish to reverse the current trend of gun crime.

1.9 pm

**Mr. Alun Michael** (Cardiff, South and Penarth): It is most important that the Government should heed the words of the Commissioner of the Metropolitan police, Sir Paul Condon, who warned that "we are being driven by events" towards the arming of police officers on our streets. However, the Government would be wrong to treat those words as a prediction—they should be read, as they were intended, as a warning. Unless the culture of violence and the availability of weapons are curbed, the consequences for our society are dire. A cursory examination of the statistics shows how serious that warning is.

In 1979, there was a one in 213 chance of being the victim of a crime of violence. Last year, the figure was one in 64, which means that the chance has trebled. Since 1982, there has been an increase of well over 80 per cent. in recorded offences of wounding, the statistical category that includes the possession of firearms and other offensive weapons. Within that category, the most serious offences of wounding or endangering life have increased by well over 120 per cent. They are massive increases in a comparatively short time.

The number of crimes in which the police recorded the use of firearms has increased considerably in recent years, and the fear and worry about such offences have been illustrated many times by serving police officers.

**Mr. Martyn Jones** (Clwyd, South-West): Will my hon. Friend acknowledge that the statistics also show that legally owned firearms are used in a very tiny proportion of crimes, and that most weapons used in such circumstances are illegal and have never been in legal hands?

**Mr. Michael:** My hon. Friend makes an interesting point. As my hon. Friend the Member for Worsley (Mr. Lewis) acknowledged, gun clubs face stringent requirements, which have had a positive effect. I have met representatives of sporting interests involving guns and I recognise that there are stringent requirements, but the important distinction is between weapons held by gun clubs or by people whose employment, often in rural areas, necessitates their use, and those held in urban areas on domestic premises.

I acknowledge the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Jones), but the matter needs to be examined with much greater care. My hon. Friend the Member for Worsley cited examples which highlighted in human terms and more graphically than statistics could ever do the problems within a five-mile radius of his own home, and he is right to demand action.

My hon. Friend the Member for Worsley also called for tougher sentences. It is only right to remind the Minister that there was nothing in the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 to deal with weapons, or with drugs and drug-related crime, which far too often involves the use of weapons, until Labour tabled its amendments. I was glad that the Minister reflected on issues raised in Committee and accepted our arguments on Report. Indeed, the Government tabled amendments to deal with many of the points that we made about the level of penalty available for the sale of weapons and for trading in them.

Other aspects of the problem need to be considered. They include mail order trade and the capacity of Customs to deal with weapons coming into this country. The fragmentation of central and eastern Europe has led to a variety of weapons becoming available.

One problem that needs closer examination concerns weapons that fall into the hands of criminals after being held legally by others. I am not sure that the nature of the statistics make it possible for us to be clear about the extent of that problem. My hon. Friend the Member for Worsley gave anecdotal evidence that gives rise to concern, but we need more information. It is important that the use of legally held weapons, if they end up in the wrong hands, and illegal weapons is tackled as a matter of great urgency.

As my hon. Friend acknowledged, there are stringent requirements on gun clubs, but we need to re-examine the holding of weapons on domestic premises. We also need to consider how a gun culture and a culture of violence is developing in our communities.

It is fair to say that there is agreement among the parties that we should not accept the easy solution, which would be to arm the police. The Home Secretary and my hon. Friend the shadow Home Secretary have made it clear that they take a more sophisticated view of the problem.

One only has to see what happens in America, where the injuring of police officers by firearms is, unfortunately, an all too regular occurrence, to learn a lesson. One in 10 of the police officers who are injured are shot with their own weapons, so arming the police is not the solution—although, sadly, the ready availability of weapons to police officers to deal with particular situations has been extended as part of the process of responding to events about which Sir Paul Condon gave us a clear warning.

I hope that the Minister will have something positive to say about the analysis of the nature of crime, the availability of weapons, links with elements of organised crime, a subject which the Select Committee on Home Affairs has been investigating, and the specific categories on which action by the Government and the various authorities could have more impact.

It is for the Minister to show us that he has proposals to tackle the problems so graphically illustrated by my hon. Friend the Member for Worsley. If he can show us that he has set in train a full analysis of the problems, and that he will introduce effective measures to reduce the culture of violence and the availability of weapons, he will receive a positive response from members of Labour's Front Bench and, as proved by my hon. Friend, from Labour Back Benchers, too.

1.17 pm

**The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Maclean):** I congratulate the hon. Member for Worsley (Mr. Lewis) on raising this important subject. I must say straight away that the Government are acutely aware of public concern—especially that in his constituency and the north-west in general—about the use of firearms by criminals. We are determined to take whatever steps we can to reduce and eliminate the criminal use of firearms, but it should be remembered that fear of crime is itself a social evil.

We must ensure that fears are not fed by misconceptions or the irrational idea that all criminals on the streets are armed to the teeth and shooting all over the place, because, thank God, they are not. We need to put the problem into perspective.

Although armed crime may inspire many awful headlines, it remains, thankfully, fairly rare in this country, although I accept that it might not always seem like it. When an armed crime happens, it is naturally front page news, and it is front page news because it is so rare.

In 1993, only 0.3 per cent. of all offences in England and Wales involved the use of a firearm, and nearly half of all the offences in which firearms were used involved air weapons. If air weapons are excluded, in nearly 90 per cent. of offences the weapon was not fired. The Government recognise that even that incidence of firearm

*[Mr. David Maclean]*

misuse, small though it is, is unacceptable, but it is worth pointing out that the problem is very much smaller than some people may have realised.

The Government are also anxious to ensure that all possible steps are take to reduce the criminal use of firearms. The controls on firearms in Great Britain were substantially strengthened by the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988, and are among the most stringent in the world. They are designed to ensure that, as far as possible, firearms do not fall into the wrong hands.

The paramount consideration is affording all necessary protection to the public, but the controls also seek to avoid placing unnecessary burdens on those who use firearms legitimately and on the police who administer the licensing system. The possession of firearms is strictly controlled by the provisions of the Firearms Acts.

A person who wishes to acquire or to possess a firearm or a shotgun will, in most circumstances, require a certificate from the local chief officer of police. In deciding whether to issue a firearms certificate, the chief officer must be satisfied that the applicant has a good reason for having the firearm and can be permitted to possess the firearm without danger to public safety or to the peace.

A chief officer must not grant a certificate to any person whom he has reason to believe to be of intemperate habits or unsound mind, or to any person whom he considers for any reason to be unfit to be entrusted with a firearm. I hasten to add that this category does not automatically exclude all Members of this House.

Only when the chief officer is satisfied that the applicant is suitable, and that he has good reason for requiring a firearm, will he issue the certificate. The good reason requirement is more stringent for firearms than it is for shotguns. To obtain a firearm certificate, an applicant must demonstrate his good reason. He does not have to demonstrate that to get a shotgun certificate, but the police must refuse a shotgun certificate if they are satisfied that the applicant does not have a good reason.

In addition, chief officers will wish to be satisfied that the reason given by the applicant for wishing to possess a firearm is applicable to the particular class of firearm requested, and that, where appropriate, the land over which an applicant intends to shoot is suitable from the point of view of safety for the class of weapon that it is proposed to use.

A certificate for a handgun, for example, will normally be granted only if the applicant has a regular and legitimate opportunity to use the weapon. An example would be target practice as a member of a pistol shooting club. Certificates issued by the chief officer are subject to certain conditions prescribed by the 1989 firearms rules.

Among the conditions is a requirement that the firearm should be securely stored, to prevent, as far as is reasonably practicable, access to the firearms by an unauthorised person. Any case of theft or loss must be reported at once to the chief officer of police who granted the certificate. In addition, the chief officer is empowered to impose further conditions if he thinks that they are necessary to ensure effective operation of the firearms controls and to minimise the risk to the public.

The sale or transfer of firearms is also strictly controlled. It is an offence to sell any firearm or shotgun unless the recipient is a firearms dealer, has a firearms certificate authorising him to possess or acquire it, or is able to show that he is entitled to possess it without holding a certificate.

A person who sells a firearm must notify the chief officer of police of the transaction within seven days. It is also an offence to sell a firearm or shotgun by way of trade or business without first being registered by the police as a firearms dealer. A chief officer of police may revoke a certificate if he is satisfied that the holder is unfit to be trusted with the firearm or shotgun that it covers.

In addition to the controls on firearms and shotguns, there are some weapons whose acquisition, possession and sale are prohibited except with the authority of the Secretary of State. These include machine guns, and most self-loading and pump-action rifles and shotguns. The controls are effective in restricting legally supplied firearms to those who are suitable to possess them and as a deterrent to casual criminals. They cannot, however, prevent determined criminals from gaining access to illegally supplied firearms. Tightening the controls still further is unlikely significantly to affect levels of armed crime.

We have looked at the matter carefully, and I shall study carefully what the hon. Member for Worsley (Mr. Lewis) has said. I believe, however, that the current controls strike the right balance between the primary need to ensure the safety of the public and the need to avoid placing unnecessary burdens on legitimate users of firearms and the police.

I should be happy to place more burdens on legitimate users if I thought for one moment that they would be successful in stopping the bad guys getting access to guns. It is because I am convinced that there are no further sensible controls that we could place on legitimate users that I do not see a reason for further action. The bad guys will still get their guns.

**Mr. Lewis:** I accept the Minister's last comment to a degree. However, he talked earlier about the fear of gun crime, the level and the figures. In some areas, there is a sudden spate of firearms offences. It is incumbent on us, and especially on Ministers, to accept that we should be scared of any increase in such crimes. We should nip things in the bud, and we should consider that we may be—I hope that we are not—on the escalator to even more gun crime. The Minister talks of headlines. We should get worried before we reach the point when the headlines go away and gun crimes are given 1.5 column inches on page 3 of the newspaper.

**Mr. Maclean:** The hon. Gentleman is right. Although all gun crime, including crimes in which air guns are used, is 0.3 per cent. of all offences, it is not evenly spread throughout the country. Gun crime will be 0.001 per cent. in some parts of the country and a lot higher elsewhere. Although dealing with illegal firearms is an important part of the jigsaw, it is not the sole part. Police in areas where criminals are using weapons need the general blanket of tight firearms controls, but they also need to target those responsible.

Yesterday morning, 22 police forces, largely in the south, the south-east and south-west of England, took part in the world's biggest Bumblebee-type operation. The Metropolitan police were involved, along with 21 other

forces, and the operation targeted people who were involved in burglary. I suspect that the police uncovered a host of other crimes, and I have no doubt that they uncovered weapons and goodness knows what else in the hundreds of raids yesterday.

I quote that as an example to the hon. Member for Worsley, because the solution to burglary is not just better locks—although they are part of the story—and not just registering all one's equipment and videos and putting one's postal code on them, although that is part of the solution. There is also the police response in targeting those responsible. The hon. Gentleman mentioned armed criminals in his area. Part of the response has to be trying to control the weapons they get, but that cannot be the only response.

We all know that, even if we made it physically impossible for any farmer anywhere in the country to have a firearm or a shotgun for shooting rabbits, the bad guys would still get their guns. Part of the response must be targeting. We heard Sir Paul Condon say recently—this is in his latest policing plan for the Metropolitan police—that the police would now target street robberies in the same way as they targeted burglaries.

Before I deal with the increased penalties, I want to say a word on the hon. Gentleman's point about domestic premises. There is no substantial evidence to suggest that the pool of illicit firearms is fed by the legitimate market, although clearly, guns that are stolen in the course of burglaries or other events from legitimate certificate holders will sometimes get through, and will be used in crime. However, the controls on the safe keeping of all firearms were substantially strengthened by the firearms rules in 1989.

The safe-keeping conditions in all firearm and shotgun certificates place the onus—it is a heavy onus in some parts of the country—on the individual. A gun cabinet is normally required, for example. The hon. Gentleman may have heard people in the shooting associations complaining vociferously about the cost of installing gun cabinets; that can be a heavy burden. People may complain, but I take the view, as someone who has a gun cabinet, that that is tough luck; it is something that we have got to do.

The cabinet must be put in securely, and the police must be satisfied that it is properly secured. If people do not have a gun cabinet, they must have a gun room with a comparable level of security, a cellar with a lockable steel door or some satisfactory alternative. In addition, precautions must be taken to prevent theft during transit. Again, the precautions will depend on the circumstances of each case.

We have no evidence to suggest that criminals are targeting houses where they think guns may be stored. The hon. Member's suggestion that we should not let people store guns in private or domestic property in urban areas—however we may define that—has the added difficulty that, at the moment, they are stored anonymously. No one has a sign on their door indicating the storage of guns. They may have an alarm system, but that is not necessarily to protect firearms. There is anonymity. Where criminals come across guns in homes, it is a random event because they have been burgling the premises—perhaps—for other reasons.

If we take all the weapons out of such premises, but leave them in rural areas, as the hon. Member for Worsley suggests, we would be clearly signalling to criminals that farmhouses are a better target, because one is always bound to find a gun there. We would also have a big transit problem of urban dwellers going to all the firearms clubs to get firearms. We would need a big increase in the number of available armouries and central storage areas, which would become prime targets.

While the hon. Gentleman's theory seems sensible—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris):** Order.

## Broadmoor Farm Business Park

1.30 pm

**Mr. Robert Hicks** (Cornwall, South-East): I am very grateful for this early opportunity to raise the subject of the Broadmoor Farm, Saltash planning application, which should have been considered by the planning services committee of Caradon district council on Wednesday 24 April 1995.

I welcome the Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, Central (Sir P. Beresford), to the Dispatch Box, but I am sorry that the Minister for Railways and Roads is not present instead, since, as will become clear from my remarks, it is the actions of the Highways Agency to which my questions, criticisms and annoyance really apply.

Broadmoor Farm is a 300-acre site located immediately west of Saltash in my constituency and adjacent to the A38 trunk road. It is a very attractive site for business development by any standards. We all hope that at some stage in the not too distant future we shall succeed in attracting to this prestige business park two or three companies of international standard and reputation. That would represent a major inward investment for the national economy. Given the present state of the economy of the Plymouth travel-to-work area, with unemployment at 8 per cent., the impact of the reductions and changes in pattern of our defence expenditure, the adverse effects of the world recession and the fragility of our regional economy, the prospect of the creation of 2,000 or more jobs at that business park is a tangible and exciting proposition.

In November, I took a delegation from Caradon district council to see the Secretary of State for the Environment to discuss economic activity in south-east Cornwall in the context of the single regeneration budget. At the meeting, the projected development of Broadmoor business park was raised. My right hon. Friend assured us that he would do everything he could to facilitate the development, especially in respect of the A38 trunk road improvements. Indeed, he pointed out the role that the integrated Government regional office could play, since he had decided a little earlier that the office should be located in Plymouth. I shall return to issues concerning the A38 road improvement and the regional Government office in a moment.

Broadmoor Farm business park has been the subject of local discussion for almost five years. Statutory bodies, such as Caradon district council and Cornwall county council, have been involved, as have key players such as the West Country development corporation and the Devon and Cornwall development bureau, now called Devon and Cornwall International, which seeks to attract international inward investment to Devon and Cornwall.

There is widespread local support for the desirability of developing Broadmoor Farm business park. It was always understood, however, that no application for outline planning consent could be considered by Caradon district council—the planning authority—until we knew the Department of Transport's preferred line of route for the A38 trunk road improvement.

The announcement of that route was made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport in the summer and was followed by discussions, informal negotiations and numerous meetings between the various statutory organisations that would be involved in the planning process once a formal application for outline planning consent had been submitted. Eventually, for reasons that are not central to the debate, two similar, but not identical, applications were due to be considered by Caradon's planning committee on Wednesday. One was submitted by the owners of Broadmoor Farm and the other by Caradon district council itself.

On 5 April 1995, to go back in time a little, the Department of the Environment wrote to Caradon district council—my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary wrote to me at the same time—indicating that if Caradon district council were minded to grant outline planning permission, the application should first be submitted to the Secretary of State for the Environment to allow him to consider whether it should be called in for his decision. That direction, issued by the Government office for the south-west under the provisions of article 14 of the Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1988, was anticipated and understandable.

In other words, a month ago, the Secretary of State for the Environment was safeguarding his and the Government's position. Indeed, the advice of Caradon's planning officers to the planning services committee for its meeting on Wednesday was that outline planning consents were warranted subject to conditions, which no doubt the Secretary of State for the Environment would have carefully examined subsequently.

We now come to the reason why I have called for this debate. Just 24 hours before Caradon's planning services committee meeting, Caradon's director of planning services received a letter from the Exeter office of the Highways Agency directing Caradon to refuse the two applications on grounds of "prematurity". I was not quite certain that such a word existed in the English language. I hope that I have pronounced it correctly.

To say that we were all caught off balance by that action at such a late hour would be an understatement. Annoyance and anger would be a more accurate description of our feelings. On Tuesday, I was chairing the Committee considering the Child Support Bill when I was informed of the action. The Committee's proceedings were very tranquil and orderly and progress was being made. My mood changed pretty smartly when I received information from Caradon's chief executive about the actions of the Highways Agency. To put it bluntly, having got so far in this protracted process, I wondered what was going on.

On Tuesday afternoon before my Committee resumed, I telephoned the private offices of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport and my hon. Friend the Minister for Railways and Roads to discover what was happening. As a consequence, on the Wednesday, Caradon's planning committee sensibly deferred the two planning applications.

The Highways Agency's decision raises a number of important issues and I want to ask the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment the following questions, although I accept that responsibility really rests with my hon. Friend the Minister for Railways and Roads.

First, why was there such short notice? It was given just 48 hours ahead of Caradon's planning committee meeting. Is that normal when everyone knew about the planning application as a result of the informal discussions that had been taking place over the previous six months or so?

Secondly, what were the reasons for issuing the direction at that late stage? As I have said, we—Caradon district council, myself and all the interested parties—were always led to believe that once the Department of Transport had made known its preferred line of route for the A38 trunk road improvement between Saltash and Trerulefoot, there was no reason in principle why an application for outline consent could not be considered.

Discussions had been taking place between the applicants' professional advisers and the Highways Agency about road links serving the Broadmoor business park in the event of the business park being developed before the A38 trunk road improvement scheme to which I have referred. The Secretary of State for the Environment had informed us that, before any outline planning consent could be confirmed by Caradon, he would want to see the papers. Surely his actions safeguarded the position.

That brings me to my third question. What was the role of the integrated Government regional office? Among others, the office contains Department of the Environment and Department of Transport personnel. Surely the purpose of the office is to prevent such nonsense from taking place where the right arm of government does not know what the left arm is doing.

Fourthly, does not the Highways Agency realise the economic, social and political importance of the project not only to my constituency and the Plymouth travel-to-work area but to the United Kingdom as a whole, given the inward investment potential?

I am not talking about some tin-shack commercial development proposal. It involves 300 acres with a job creation potential of 2,000 or more in an area that has suffered adversely economically as a consequence of changes in defence, the rundown in our basic employment source, the world recession and from an economy which is still very fragile. The aim is to attract two or three major inward investors to the United Kingdom on that site.

If my hon. Friend the Minister accepts the logic of what I have said, my fifth question is will the Highways Agency now withdraw the direction to refuse? I hope, as do my constituents, Caradon district council and the developers, that we can now get on with this exciting and major project.

I find it somewhat ironic that the Department of Trade and Industry calls itself the Department of enterprise. However, here we have a project from the private sector, supported by the public sector, yet that very enterprise is being stifled as a direct consequence of the actions of the Highways Agency. We want to get on with the job because it will have very positive, beneficial and favourable consequences not only for my constituency and for the region, but for the United Kingdom as a whole.

1.44 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Sir Paul Beresford):** I want to respond to some of the points that have been raised by my hon. Friend and on behalf of my hon. Friend the Minister for Railways and Roads. I will ensure that he receives a copy of the points that have been raised, even if I have to sign the copy of *Hansard* and send it to him myself.

I understand the concerns expressed emphatically by my hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, South-East (Mr. Hicks) about Broadmoor Farm business park. From earlier discussions, I also understand that my hon. Friend the Minister for Railways and Roads is concerned about the matter.

As has been said, the land in question at Broadmoor Farm is an area of 450 acres and is located to the north-west of Saltash on the west side of the Tamar river, opposite the city of Plymouth. Although I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, South-East is aware of its position, at least what I have said enables me to get the picture.

The area of land is substantial and it is unique in the far south-west. It lies close to the heart of the sub-region. It is generally free of planning constraints—at least it was—and it is physically capable of development. It is also in a limited number of ownerships. The land lies adjacent to, and north of, the A38. Those are important attributes affecting the potential for development in the future, particularly in that area.

The Government are concerned to secure the long-term prosperity of the important sub-region and have taken positive steps to secure that objective generally, and in relation to the particular site. As my hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, South-East explained, we established last year a joint Government office for the south-west in Plymouth to help to secure an integrated approach to promotion, planning and investment in the sub-region. I am sure that my hon. Friend welcomes the presence and local availability of senior Government officers and officials, who appreciate the interests and concerns of his constituents and of those throughout Cornwall and Devon.

The most important consideration to be borne in mind is that, as my hon. Friend has explained, the site is attractive and suitable for major inward investment. Such a site is at a premium in the sub-region and that gives added importance to the future designation and use of the land at Broadmoor Farm.

The current development plans for the area are the approved Cornwall structure plan, which looks ahead to the year 2001, and the county countryside local plan. However, as my hon. Friend is aware, neither makes provision for development at Broadmoor Farm. The county is consulting on a new structure plan looking to the year 2011 and Caradon district council has placed its district local plan on deposit for objections. Both those plans include proposals for major investment at Broadmoor Farm.

We are concerned that that unique asset should be effectively preserved for a single major inward investment and should not be subject to piecemeal development that could and should be accommodated satisfactorily on other sites already designated for business use or with planning permission. I am aware from my hon. Friend's approach and the points that he made that he agrees with that; obviously, Caradon district council also agrees.

The Government's view of the potential of Broadmoor Farm and its wider economic value is reflected in the decision to realign the preferred route of the A38 improvement scheme, which was announced in November 1994. The Government office registered a strong interest with the Highways Agency in maintaining the integrity of the Broadmoor Farm site following the earlier public consultations on the preferred route. As my hon. Friend is aware, my hon. Friend the Minister for Railways and Roads agreed to adjust the preferred route to avoid bisecting the Broadmoor Farm site after full discussion

*[Sir Paul Beresford]*

with local authorities and landowners' agents—*[Interruption.]* From the noises behind me, it appears that my hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, South-East accepts that that was a helpful response.

The Highways Agency considers that it has had useful discussions with all parties involved, and it intends to continue those meetings as the A38 improvement scheme progresses through the next design stage towards publishing draft line and side road orders. That will enable the agency to remain aware of both the local planning authority's and the developer's plans as they are formulated. Such decisions will provide scope for modifying the design of the trunk road through negotiation, where appropriate.

Although the timing and progress of the A38 improvement is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, I am aware that those matters can be affected positively where there is the prospect of a contribution from developers towards the cost of the scheme.

I should now like to refer to more recent events. Last autumn, the principal landowner, W. H. Bond and Sons, submitted a planning application to Caradon district council to develop 260 acres of the 450-acre Broadmoor Farm site. In January this year, Caradon submitted its outline planning application for 395 acres of land within the site. After careful consideration, on 5 April I authorised the Government office to issue a direction under article 14 of the Town and Country Planning Act General Development Order 1988. That direction requires Caradon district council to submit to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment any planning application that it proposes to approve affecting land within the defined site. I informed my hon. Friend of that action at that time and of the reasons for it, which he and the council accept.

The House will appreciate that I must be extremely cautious in my remarks, lest I inadvertently prejudice any future planning application in that locality, determination of which falls to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

The article 14 direction leaves Caradon district council free to consider all planning applications and to reach its conclusions on them. The standing direction relates tothe site and remains in force until it is removed. It is necessary to allow my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to consider the wider national and regional implications of any planning applications and whether he should call them in for his own determination.

In parallel with the action by my Department, the Highways Agency has been considering the implications of the current planning applications for the trunk road network in the vicinity of Broadmoor Farm.

In December 1994, the Highways Agency was consulted by Caradon district council on the planning application by W. H. Bond and Sons and the accompanying traffic impact assessment. As the development would have a significant impact on the existing highway network, the Highways Agency commissioned consultants to evaluate the traffic impact assessment, including the likely impact on the trunk road capacity and safety of the traffic that would be generated by the proposed development.

On 25 January, the Highways Agency sent its preliminary views to the director of planning services at Caradon district council. It explained—I think that my hon. Friend will accept this—that the development would cause severe capacity problems at the A38 Carkeel roundabout, and that it was unlikely that any worthwhile increase in peak-hour capacity could be achieved without some form of grade-separated junction, as proposed in the A38 Saltash to Trerulefoot improvement scheme.

In early February, the Highways Agency also met the developer's consultants, who agreed to provide more detailed information on the traffic that would be generated by the proposed development.

On 14 March, Caradon district council consulted the Highways Agency about its planning application for 160 hectares. That development relied on the proposed A38 and A388 road improvements for access and the availability of sufficient road capacity.

In relation to both planning applications, the Highways Agency considered carefully whether the trunk road interests could be adequately protected by requiring planning conditions to be attached to the planning consents sought. Its legal advice, consistent with the guidance given in Department of the Environment circular 1/85, is that any condition which the Highways Agency devised would be invalid. That follows the uncertainties associated with the statutory authorisation and execution of the proposed A38 road improvements. Any conditional consent granted now would be incapable of implementation by the applicant within the normal period of the planning consent.

Consequently, the Highways Agency came to the view that the Broadmoor Farm development applications were premature pending publication of draft orders for the A38 Saltash to Trerulefoot improvement and a detailed assessment of the development's traffic impact. That left the agency with no option other than to direct refusal on grounds of prematurity. The notifications were issued on 21 April. A few days later, the county surveyor of Cornwall county council, as the local highways authority, similarly advised refusal of the applications for the same reasons.

The Highways Agency would have been neglecting its responsibilities for the trunk road network if it had not acted and had left my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Environment to call in the applications because of their trunk road implications. Such a course of action would also have involved all parties in the unnecessary expense of a public inquiry.

The Highways Agency has made it clear that it has no objection in principle to development at that location, subject to the satisfactory resolution of the highway issues, and that it appreciates the wider economic and social importance of the potential development site. I am aware that my hon. Friend the Minister for Railways and Roads has recently and urgently reviewed the circumstances in which the Highways Agency issued directions to Caradon district council relating to the proposed development at Broadmoor Farm. Furthermore, he has been stimulated to put in hand urgent arrangements for a meeting which will involve him and my hon. Friend, along with the developers, the district council and the Highways Agency to explore the possibilities.

It is worth explaining the importance of the site and the concern to bring work and industry of national importance to the area. The Government are seriously concerned.

There have been long discussions, perhaps not at public meetings but certainly between officials of the various agencies and the council. Although the notice was short, it should have been foreseen. Nevertheless, the fact that a Transport Minister is calling a meeting with all parties will stimulate a faster and more positive response. The reason for that is that the Government are concerned to secure the long-term prosperity of that important sub-region, of which the site is an important part.

We must recognise the importance of attracting new investment to help to diversify and revive the economy in the area, which, as my hon. Friend said, has been badly affected by the rundown of the defence industry. It is worth touching on some of the constructive things that we are doing to approach the problem.

The Plymouth development corporation is charged with revitalising three key waterfront sites leased by the Ministry of Defence, and it currently has a budget of £40 million.

**Mr. Hicks:** Before my hon. Friend refers to the generality, I should like to concentrate his mind again on the Broadmoor site—I could have written nine tenths of his speech. Clearly, the Department of the Environment fully supported what we are trying to do locally in the partnership between the private sector and the public sector.

I want an assurance from my hon. Friend. If the Highways Agency will not withdraw the direction to refuse, it must accept that the development in principle at Broadmoor may proceed before the A30 trunk road improvement scheme, provided the necessary arrangements are made to meet increased traffic flows—at the Carkeel roundabout matter in particular—so that the road structure can accommodate the increased flows during the interim period. That is what I am asking.

**Sir Paul Beresford:** I thank my hon. Friend for what seems to be an eminently sensible approach. I hope that we can persuade my hon. Friend the Minister for Railways and Roads constructively to use the meeting to see whether he, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, the developers, the district council and the Highways Agency could improve the chances of speeding up the development of that important site.

It is clear that planning approval for substantial developments on the site depends on the development and improvement of the main roads highway. It turns on the successful completion of the statutory procedures and the availability of finance. However, I do not see why we cannot expect, as a result of the meeting, a constructive approach from all parties in an attempt to ensure that this key site is used for the benefit of industry in the area—although, as my hon. Friend has pointed out, its national economic importance must also be recognised.

## Burtonwood Air Base

2 pm

**Mr. Mike Hall** (Warrington, South): I must begin by declaring an interest. As well as representing the area, I live next to the northern perimeter fence of the Burtonwood air base, and can therefore speak with real conviction about the problems that face my constituents and me.

Burtonwood air base has an important place in the history of our country, particularly in view of the part that it played in the defence of Britain and the rest of Europe in the second world war. From 1942, it was the depot that received goods flown and shipped in from across the Atlantic; after the cessation of hostilities in 1945, it became a long-term storage depot for the United States army. Another relatively important part of its history was its usefulness during the Berlin airlift, and its immense importance during the cold war.

Until recently, the air base was characterised by its use for long-term storage by the US army, with short vehicle movements into and out of the complex and a good many rail deliveries. That happened for 40 or 50 years, but I should emphasise that no aeroplane has entered the base for at least that time: the term "air base" does not really give an accurate description of what has been going on there.

Over the past 10 years, what has actually evolved at the base is a high-quality residential development. The Warrington and Runcorn development corporation—a direct agent for the Department of the Environment—and, latterly, the Commission for the New Towns, which is also a direct agent for the Department, have granted planning permission to land allocations for residential use to the east, north and west of the base. That completes a residential development around the base—north, south, east and west.

A brochure published in 1987 by Fairclough Homes made it clear that the Warrington and Runcorn development corporation had high expectations for this part of my constituency. The brochure described the area as a

"carefully chosen location with an abundance of trees, bushes and flowers adorning its landscaped gardens and peaceful cul-de-sac approach road, Chestnut Grange offers a tranquil and idyllic setting for this delightful range of elegant homes."

Indeed, it persuaded people to come and buy new homes in this village setting.

What has happened since then? In 1992, the US army air force decided that it had no future use for the air base, and would vacate the premises in the summer of 1993. From that moment on, I have attempted to persuade the Ministry of Defence to engage in a sensible planning approach to the future use of the base. On 15 July 1993, I wrote to the Secretary of State about the development in west Warrington—the MOD site at Burtonwood air base and the Property Services Agency site on Burtonwood road, Great Sankey, Warrington, Cheshire.

The letter was succinct. I wrote:

"The above two Government sites are in my constituency. The PSA site is identified in the Warrington Local Plan for residential and associated development. The Airbase site will soon be left vacant by the US Army Airforce and decisions as to whether the MOD are to put the site to further domestic military use is expected soon. The two sites cover a massive area in close proximity to the Omega site which is ear-marked for large scale industrial/commercial development.

It is obvious that the current presumptions in favour of development of the PSA site and Omega site, together with a continued military use or further development of the Burtonwood

*[Mr. Mike Hall]*

Airbase site will place an intolerable burden on the infrastructure in this part of my constituency. Likewise, it would have a major impact upon the environment in this rural suburban area which would not only be detrimental to the locality and its residents, it would also adversely affect the economic health of the town of Warrington.

A positive way forward would be for a comprehensive and integrated approach to future development in this part of my constituency. This should include:—

1) a clear statement on the future use of Burtonwood Airbase;

2) a detailed analysis of the infrastructure needs to ensure that all the proposed development can be accommodated;

3) an environment impact study to ensure that any proposed development is suitable for the area;

4) an appraisal of the current deficiencies in community provision to ensure these are met in any proposed development; and

5) a co-ordinated approach to the development of the three sites in line with the planning framework provided by the Warrington Local Plan.

To take this matter forward in a comprehensive manner, a multi-agency approach needs to be adopted that will give equal consideration to the needs of The Department for the Environment, the Ministry of Defence and Warrington Borough Council. Can I suggest that the Commission for New Towns is given a lead role in this matter, to prepare a fully comprehensive planning brief based upon a full environmental/social impact assessment. This, I am sure, offers a positive way forward of dealing with a potentially very complicated and damaging planning situation."

When I wrote those words, I did not know that we would be faced today with a commercial use of the air base that has resulted in a loss of residential amenities for my constituents. I was disappointed to receive a reply from the Under-Secretary of State for Defence, dated 11 August 1993, which stated:

"it is doubtful if the Ministry of Defence will be able to help significantly with those aims".

Part of the air base that we are discussing is Header house, which contains 1.6 million sq ft of warehouse storage space. In the middle of last year, the land agents for the Ministry of Defence advertised to the commercial world that they would let the building at a rent of £1.50 a square foot. Simple mathematics tell us that if the building is completely occupied—as it is—that will mean some £3.2 million in revenue for the MOD. That is the start of the problem.

Without consulting local Members of Parliament, Warrington borough council's planning authority or local residents, the MOD unilaterally decided to let the air base as a storage depot for heavy goods vehicles and trailers. It made that decision overnight.

I know that the Minister is not responsible for the air base, but I ask him to picture Burtonwood road—a narrow country lane, classified not as an A road or a B road but as a C road. It has no street lights and no footpath; in places, the carriageway, if it can be called that, is only 17 ft wide, not wide enough to allow two HGVs to pass each other. Each week, 5,000 38-tonne juggernauts thunder down Burtonwood road on their journey to and from the air base.

Those who have the misfortune to live in or off Burtonwood road are prisoners in their own homes. They must now constantly suffer the noise, vibration, diesel emissions and exhaust pollutants—all the disturbance produced by vehicle movements past their front windows 24 hours a day, seven days a week. My constituents' sleep is regularly disturbed, and local doctors have confirmed to me in writing that the volume of traffic in the road is causing them ill health. Those residents, and people living adjacent to the air base, have lost much of the value of their properties.

Not only must the residents put up with all that; lorries now drive over their front gardens. I am quite sure that those houses will suffer structural damage in the years to come. Local residents who live in properties adjacent to the air base have had what was an enjoyable, tranquil and rural life style completely changed, and their lives have been turned into misery. They have suffered a severe loss of residential amenity as a direct result of the uncaring and insensitive actions of the Government.

The activities on the base are just as bad. Local residents who live all around the base must contend with HGVs revving their engines on the site, the constant gear-crunching which goes with the manoeuvres of the vehicles, the reverse sirens wailing, the air brakes hissing and trailers being dumped to the ground. The diesel exhaust fumes from all the vehicles are building up a public health problem in the area for years to come. Warrington has an above average incidence of asthma, and the fumes will make that problem worse.

A further problem is that the base is a real fire hazard. It is a powder keg waiting to blow—an accident waiting to happen. The chief fire officer of Cheshire fire brigade wrote to me to say that in the event of a serious fire at the base, local residents would be in danger of airborne pollutants outside acceptable levels. He was unable to give me a categorical assurance that the fire measures in place give the most appropriate protection against a likely fire hazard associated with the current use of the premises.

I have been told now that smoke detectors on the site warehouses in Header house have been switched off because the fumes from the HGVs and fork-lift trucks set off the fire alarms. The building does not have a sprinkler system, nor does it have any fire walls within it. Some 30,000 litres of diesel are stored on the site, and liquid propane gas is stored there inappropriately. With the smoke alarms turned off and the current storage of dry consumable goods, the potential for a serious fire is very high. The consequences for local residents of such a fire do not bear thinking about.

Confirmation of the problem has come from two independent sources. First, the north west traffic commissioner adjudicated on an application by TDG to run an operating licence from Burtonwood air base. Commenting on the evidence from local people, the commissioner stated that they all gave evidence of daily disturbance from noise, vibration and fumes—particularly at night.

The commissioner quoted evidence from Mr. P. Woods, the environmental protection officer for Warrington borough council, whose detailed report confirmed that the noise from TDG's night operations exceeded statutory limits. Even TDG's noise experts agreed that there was a problem. It is not surprising that J. H. Levin, on behalf of the deputy licensing authority, concluded that he was

"satisfied that the operations at present carried out under the interim authority are causing such adverse environmental problems that the application for a full licence should be refused."

He said that Warrington council was of the opinion that the activities on the air base were in contravention of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

To make matters worse, the matter has been brought to a head by the Government's intransigence and their refusal to act to protect the interests of local residents, taxpayers and voters. Until now, the Government have refused to engage in a joint planning exercise to determine an acceptable future use for Burtonwood air base. They failed to consult local Members of Parliament, Warrington borough council or the local residents before turning Burtonwood air base into a commercial lorry and trailer park, with the attendant problems that I have described.

On 28 March 1995, my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) and I met the Under-Secretary of State for Defence, Lord Henley, to bring attention to the severe loss of residential amenity suffered by neighbours of Burtonwood air base. I followed that meeting with a letter to seek action from the Government to put a stop to the totally unacceptable use of the air base. Unfortunately, the Ministry of Defence refused. Likewise, my request for a weekend and night-time curfew on lorry movement to and from the base was refused.

Even the request from Warrington borough council for a copy of the report on noise prevention measures compiled by the land agents for the Ministry of Defence was refused. I might add that noise attenuation measures on the base will not solve the problem, nor will moving the problem around the base by using other entrances and exits. All that that would do would be to spread the problem to other areas in my constituency, which would suffer if alternative arrangements for traffic on the site were made.

The only solution is to stop the traffic altogether. The excuse given by the Ministry of Defence for the refusals is that it is in dispute with Warrington council as to whether the current commercial activities at the base are covered by the existing planning permission. The Ministry of Defence believes that it has existing permission to allow the current commercial use at the base. The problem is not the planning permission itself, but it is a clear sign that the MOD is using the planning issue to resolve the dispute in its favour.

If that is the case and the MOD is deemed to have planning permission, it will continue the present use of the base and will sell it on the open market to the highest bidder as a storage facility. That will ensure that the purgatory that has been experienced by my constituents becomes permanent. That is simply not acceptable.

We would like to hear today from the Ministry of Defence that it recognises that it was the Government who brought people to live in this area, and that the Warrington and Runcorn development corporation and the Commission for the New Towns also encouraged people to live there. The Government are directly responsible for the creation of the residential development which now surrounds Burtonwood air base, and are also responsible for changing the nature of that high-quality residential neighbourhood.

The Government have a moral responsibility to ensure that the people who now live in that modern village setting do not suffer a loss of residential amenity as a result of the Government's actions. Clearly, the Ministry of Defence can now ensure that the use of the air base is determined in such a way that local residents can continue to enjoy the quality of life that they have enjoyed since they first moved into the area. To do anything else would represent a severe breach of faith on the Government's part.

It is worth remembering that we celebrate VE day this week. Burtonwood air base played a major part in bringing peace to Europe. I hope that the Ministry of Defence will now play a major part in bringing peace to my constituents.

2.16 pm

**Mr. Doug Hoyle** (Warrington, North): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Hall) for giving me the opportunity to take part in the debate, as half the base is in my constituency. I also thank the Minister of State for Defence Procurement for being here to listen and to reply.

I hope that the Minister will not hide behind the question whether the Ministry of Defence has planning permission. We realise that Burtonwood was once the largest ordnance depot for the United States army in Europe, but at that time—as my hon. Friend explained—many of the movements were made by rail. Local residents are now experiencing unacceptable lorry movements on the site.

I hope that the Minister takes that fact on board, as the Under-Secretary of State did not do so when my hon. Friend and I met him recently. The Minister should go for an integrated plan with Warrington borough council and the Commission for the New Towns which involves the residents. Life for local people has become intolerable, as we are talking about 5,000 vehicle movements on a road that—by any stretch of the imagination—is not suitable. How much worse will it get if the Ministry of Defence carries on with what appears to be its present plan, and sells the site on the open market as a storage depot? Will the 5,000 movements become 10,000 or 20,000?

Already, life is intolerable for people who, following an agreement with the Warrington and Runcorn development corporation, bought houses in what was a residential area. I never have sympathy for those who buy houses next to a site and then start to complain about what is going on at the site. The area has been completely altered, and I ask the Minister to approach the matter in a spirit of co-operation, and not confrontation.

2.18 pm

**The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Roger Freeman):** I congratulate the hon. Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Hall) on his success in debating this motion today. Clearly, it is a matter of great importance to his constituents and to those of his hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle).

I recall visiting RAF Burtonwood when I was Under-Secretary of State responsible for the armed forces between 1986 and 1988—I cannot recall which year. The impression that I received was of an enormous facility in a leafy area of Warrington. Peace and quiet prevailed because, frankly, it was used for storing items in preparation for conflict, which fortunately never occurred. Clearly, a solution to the problem has to be found and it has to involve Warrington borough council—that is as plain as a pikestaff.

Following the withdrawal of the United States army in 1993, and in the usual way, we considered whether the site could be used for alternative defence purposes. The

*[Mr. Roger Freeman]*

hon. Member for Warrington, South referred to the apparent delay between the withdrawal of the American army and where we are today. Use of the site as a base for the long-term storage of army vehicles was one of a number of potential uses. After much careful consideration, however, it was concluded that the site could not sensibly be used for defence purposes and was surplus to Ministry of Defence requirements.

I recognise that the Department took some time to reach that conclusion, but that was due to the need to reflect the changing assumptions of the "Front Line First" study at the time and the considerable care that we took to identify alternative defence uses. That is the first step when disposing of defence sites, as the hon. Member for Warrington, South will recognise. We want to find out whether there could be, first, another defence use and, secondly, another public sector use. Finally, we consider disposal, but with the co-operation and involvement of the local authority.

My noble Friend Lord Henley wrote to the hon. Member for Warrington, South on 21 March to advise him of our conclusions and that we intended to dispose of the site on the open market. I must stress that an empty site such as RAF Burtonwood is a substantial burden on our resources. The costs incurred in maintaining and securing empty sites are significant. The early disposal of surplus property is, therefore, a real priority. In the meantime, ways of alleviating the running costs, which now fall to the MOD, but certainly did not previously do so in their entirety, must be considered. In other words, there is another element in this difficult equation—the taxpayers' interests, as they have to pay, through the Ministry of Defence and RAF Strike Command, which is the top-level budget holder responsible for the site.

My Department believes that, under town and country planning legislation, the current permitted use of RAF Burtonwood is for storage and distribution, which in planning terms is referred to as B8 use. On that basis, pending a final decision on the future of the site, and to defray the cost of maintaining and policing the establishment which, as the hon. Gentleman knows, is about £400,000 a year, the defence land agent negotiated a number of short-term lettings. I believe that he was right to do so because, as a Minister accountable to this House, with my noble Friend Lord Henley in another place, I have responsibility for accounting for, mitigating and reducing the taxpayer's expenditure. So, the defence land agent was perfectly correct in what he did.

Although we regard the exact income that we are generating from present activities at RAF Burtonwood as commercially confidential, I can advise the hon. Member for Warrington, South that it is in excess of the running costs of the site. I am sure that he will appreciate that that not only removes a not insignificant burden on the defence budget but is of benefit to the taxpayer.

Indeed, our intended disposal strategy was to build up the commercial usage of the site by completing new tenancies of three and five years and to sell the site as a going concern with the benefit of good short-term income, allowing a purchaser time to plan in the longer term for its redevelopment. That strategy presented the opportunity to dispose of the site quickly because of the generated cash flow, while meeting our obligation to maximise the return to the taxpayer. I must stress, however, that we never considered that the site would be used for storage and distribution in the long term. On the contrary, we envisage it becoming part of the sustainable redevelopment that is taking place within the Great Sankey area.

As the hon. Member for Warrington, South said, the problem is the short-term use, as we do not envisage such a long-term use given the road system, which is inadequate by any standards—as I recall, the site is not exactly served directly by dual carriageway or motorway-standard roads. Residential development has been taking place in the vicinity of RAF Burtonwood in recent years, however, and the present level of commercial usage—especially the increase in HGV movement—has given rise to complaints from local residents concerning nuisance and noise, especially at night.

The hon. Member for Warrington, North was frank and correct in saying that, if one buys a house close to a railway station, railway line, road or former RAF-owned but American-operated storage depot, one cannot assume that the usage that existed when one bought it will continue for ever. Although that is a correct and absolute statement, one has to use common sense to ensure that its conversion, certainly within the public sector, is carried out as sensitively as possible.

My Department acknowledges that our commercial tenants have created greater HGV movement than that generated by use by the United States army, which primarily involved the long-term storage of war reserves and hence generated relatively few vehicle movements and little on-site activity. I fully understand the concern of local residents. We have taken positive steps to minimise the disturbance caused by present activities and the local defence land agent has appointed a firm of environmental consultants to advise on possible short-term and long-term solutions to the noise and traffic problems.

The suggested short-term solutions have been passed to Warrington borough council and, although the hon. Member for Warrington, South was somewhat dismissive, include driver training, the introduction of stringent site rules, night patrolling and direction of traffic flow. The longer-term proposals will be available shortly and are expected to include such measures as the provision of sound-absorbing fencing, bunds and landscaping and also the introduction of new access arrangements. I take the hon. Gentleman's point that merely re-routing the same volume of noisy traffic does not necessarily solve the problem, but it is important to consider new access arrangements to find out whether the problems can be alleviated. We are very willing to put our suggested long-term solutions to Warrington borough council, but as yet we have had no response to our short-term proposals.

I hope, therefore, that the next step will be a joint meeting between my officials and Warrington borough council. I am sure that the hon. Member for Warrington, South, as a former leader of the council, and the hon. Member for Warrington, North would be welcome at such a meeting so that their views can be included.

We had intended to enter into discussions with Warrington borough council on the future use of RAF Burtonwood and to try to resolve the present dispute about the existing planning use of the site. Wherever possible, it is our policy to work closely with local authorities and my noble Friend Lord Henley has stressed our

preparedness to enter into substantive discussions with Warrington borough council at his recent meeting with the hon. Gentlemen.

Warrington borough council recently sought the consent of the Crown to the issue of enforcement notices against the occupiers of the site. The council believes that the current use represents a breach of planning control, on the basis that there is no legal right to use the site for storage and distribution. As the hon. Gentlemen may be aware, when the Crown has an interest in land, enforcement notices cannot be served without the consent of the Secretary of State. We very much hope that, until the long-term future is established, agreement about use of the site can be reached through discussions among affected parties.

As I said, the Department believes that the established and current use of RAF Burtonwood is for storage and distribution. Nevertheless, in view of Warrington borough council's request that the Secretary of State should give his consent to the issue of enforcement notices against the present occupiers, we felt it appropriate to seek the advice of leading counsel, which we have just received. I can advise the hon. Gentlemen that counsel supports our view that the current established use of the site is for storage and distribution and that that use may be continued by occupants other than the Ministry of Defence.

At this stage, we would not wish to comment further on enforcement notices. I hope that it does not come to that because, as the hon. Member for Warrington, North rightly said, the issue should be solved sensibly, after negotiation and certainly after meetings, and we should not be involved simply in a legal dispute over planning. Rather, we propose to enter into substantive discussions with Warrington borough council on the future use of the site with a view to finding a solution with which all parties are content. In the first instance, I asked my officials to contact Warrington borough council to arrange an early meeting, and a meeting has now been set for 18 May.

In the meantime, and in view of the current level of local concern, we shall ensure that there is no intensification of the current activities at RAF Burtonwood. In addition, we are taking measures to terminate the occupation of those users who have proved to be unsuitable. As the hon. Members for Warrington, North and for Warrington, South know, one of the major occupiers is currently seeking alternative accommodation. Notwithstanding that, we shall also undertake a stringent review to ensure that all tenants comply with the terms of their lease.

I hope that that and other measures, which I shall ask the defence land agent to propose in his meeting with Warrington borough council, will go at least some way towards satisfying the hon. Gentlemen's concerns.

*It being half-past Two o'clock, the Motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, pursuant to order [19 December].*

## PRIVATE BUSINESS

ACCOMMODATION LEVEL CROSSINGS BILL *[Lords].*

*Read a Second time and committed.*

# Oral Answers to Questions

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

### Overseas Investment

1. **Mrs. Lait:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps are being taken to encourage further investment by British companies overseas. [20411]

**The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Alastair Goodlad):** How best to succeed overseas is a matter for the management of British companies. The Government's Overseas Trade Services supply information and advice to help companies enter new markets.

**Mrs. Lait:** I thank my right hon. Friend for that information. Given that, historically, diplomats could not tell the difference between a gadget and a widget, how is the Foreign Office gearing up to offer expert help to companies that wish to extend their exports?

**Mr. Goodlad:** The promotion of trade and inward investment from overseas now uses more resources than any other front-line Foreign and Commonwealth Office activity. Some 30 per cent. of front-line staff overseas now do commercial work. We are creating more than 100 new commercial jobs abroad and opening 14 new posts, some in newly emerging markets in Asia and Latin America. British industry wants and is willing to pay for these services, which the Foreign Office and the Department of Trade and Industry jointly offer, and 90 per cent. of those who have used our services say that they would use them again. Export orders and inward investment are often won partly because of those services.

### EU-US Relations

2. **Mr. Waterson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on relations between the European Union and the United States of America. [20413]

**The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd):** The United States is the European Union's most important international partner. With annual trade between the two sides at more than $200 billion and a total of some $450 billion invested in each other's markets, it is also Europe's most important trading partner. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and President Clinton agreed in Washington that Europe and north America should work together on new ways of reducing barriers to open trade and strengthening the world trading system. We shall pursue those ideas with our north American and European partners.

**Mr. Waterson:** I thank my right hon. Friend for that answer. Does he agree that it is very much in this country's interests to develop a more open trading relationship between Britain and the European Union on the one hand and the USA on the other? What are the prospects for developing that more open relationship within the next few years?

**Mr. Hurd:** I certainly hope that those prospects will become a reality. The new World Trade Organisation rules require that any such free trade areas should be genuinely free and cover substantially all trade, which would need to include such sensitive sectors as agriculture and textiles, so it will not be entirely easy. We see a useful role for Europe and north America acting as pathfinders, working together on ways of removing non-tariff barriers to trade and extending liberalisation, for example, in financial services.

**Mr. Bill Walker:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that, in this troubled and dangerous world, the finest way to help security would be to develop a free trade area embracing Europe and the north American free trade area? Would that not do more to stabilise conditions than almost anything else?

**Mr. Hurd:** I agree. As I said to my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Waterson), various steps can be taken and we hope to act as pathfinders in that direction.

### Land Mines

3. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had in the EC about strengthening the UN protocol on the use of land mines. [20414]

**The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. David Davis):** We have taken a number of initiatives both on our own and with others since July 1994. With our strong support, on 10 April the Foreign Affairs Council agreed a proposal for European Union joint action on land mines. That includes an agreement on common objectives to strengthen protocol 2 of the 1981 United Nations weaponry convention at its review conference in Vienna in September 1995.

In particular, the European Union will work to promote universal adherence, to extend the scope to cover non-international armed conflict, to strengthen restrictions and prohibitions on the use of anti-personnel land mines, to agree an effective verification mechanism, and to include provisions on mine clearance and technical assistance.

**Mr. Dunn:** My hon. Friend will be aware of the great concern about this issue throughout the country, and especially within the church organisations in our nation. What are Britain's objectives at the convention and what does my hon. Friend expect to achieve at that convention when it meets?

**Mr. Davis:** My hon. Friend is right about the concern expressed about the issue, which the Government are to a large extent reflecting in our decisions. Obviously, we support everything that I have outlined in terms of the European Union's objectives. In addition, Britain wants to see strengthened technical criteria which ensure that anti-personnel land mines are detectable—the most dangerous land mines for civilians are those that are non-detectable—and that self-destruct mechanisms are reliable. We also want to see improved provision for the marking and recording of mined areas. All those policy objectives are aimed at creating a workable and effective policy that will protect civilians from hazard.

**Mr. Alton:** Has the Minister had a chance to reflect on the reply given to me last night by the Minister of State for Defence Procurement that the answers that have been

given in the House during the past decade have been inaccurate because the definition used by NATO of what constitutes an anti-personnel land mine is not that which has been used by his Department or by the Department of Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs? In the light of that, how many mines manufactured from 1986 onwards did not meet those criteria? What objections do the Government now have to publishing the criteria for what precisely constitutes an anti-personnel land mine?

**Mr. Davis:** I am afraid that I have not seen the exchange between the hon. Gentleman and my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement last night. For a number of years, we have not exported any land mines under the NATO definition. I shall look at the matter if the hon. Gentleman wishes. As he knows, I take the matter extremely seriously and I will write to him to try to clarify the points that he raises.

**Mr. Tony Lloyd:** Is the Minister saying that the Government would countenance the export of land mines if they were fitted with a self-destruct capacity? If so, does he accept claims that the failure level of self-destruct mechanisms as high as 10 per cent? If the hon. Gentleman is to allow similar types of exports, what research has his Department commissioned which would give any credibility to the suggestion that these types of anti-personnel devices—horrific in their consequences—should be exported by this or any other nation?

**Mr. Davis:** If the hon. Gentleman or his predecessor on the Opposition Front Bench had attended the debate in the Chamber some while ago—initiated, I believe, by the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen)—they would have heard me comment on precisely that. The hon. Gentleman's predecessor got the figure wrong when she wrote to me after the event.

The technology for self-destructing or self-neutralising land mines is not very advanced or difficult. Our aim, which I outlined earlier, in the UN weaponry convention, is to ensure that we lay down the standard for a failure level of no more than one in 1,000. Others think that much more is achievable. The technology is not difficult to understand, so it does not require massive amounts of research. Once standards are laid down, the Ministry of Defence, in obtaining land mines to replace the dumb land mines that we have now, will undertake studies to ensure that they meet the standards required.

### Middle East Peace Process

4. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the middle east peace process. [20415]

**Mr. Hurd:** The pace of progress has been disappointing, but those involved with the Palestinian track are still edging forward. There is a prospect of agreement on holding elections and the accompanying Israeli withdrawal from west bank towns by the end of June. Mr. Yasser Arafat's moves to clamp down on terrorism have clearly had some positive effect.

**Mr. Ross:** Will the Foreign Secretary join me in expressing regret at the death in Shin Beth custody of Abd a-Samed Harizat, a Palestinian from Hebron who, although he had links with Hamas, was entitled to protection under Israeli law while in custody? Does the Foreign Secretary agree that while we are unanimously opposed to suicide bombing or terrorist activities as a way of moving the peace proposals forward, the best way to resolve the suicide bombers' terrorist campaign is to press ahead with the Palestinian elections as quickly and expeditiously as possible so that there can be a genuine democratically elected Government to represent the Palestinian authorities in the peace negotiations?

**Mr. Hurd:** I am sure that the whole House would condemn all recent violence in these disputes, from whatever quarter. One good thing has shone through: despite all the difficulties and tragedies, both sides have committed themselves to press on with negotiations and not to abandon the peace process. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the next step is to complete talks on elections and the redeployment of Israeli forces by 1 July. I hope that that will happen.

**Mr. John Marshall:** Will my right hon. Friend join me in condemning the Hamas murderers who seek to kill innocent civilians, derail the peace process and undermine the efforts of Mr. Arafat to secure peace in the region?

**Mr. Hurd:** Yes, I would. They are among those who are seeking to sabotage the peace process. They should therefore be opposed and support should be withheld from them by everyone.

**Mr. Watson:** Does the Foreign Secretary agree that it was especially reprehensible that the Israeli authorities announced that 133 acres of Palestinian land in east Jerusalem were to be expropriated for building exclusively Jewish housing projects on the very day when it was announced that the Israeli army were to withdraw from the six Palestinian towns on the west bank? In the past, the Foreign Secretary has condemned Israeli building in the occupied territories. Will he now take firm action to ensure that that point is forcefully made to the Israeli Government, and that serious attempts are made to stop that project going ahead?

**Mr. Hurd:** Yes. We believe, as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made clear when he was there, that all settlement building should be stopped because it is illegal and an obstacle to peace. We are concerned about the decision to expropriate land in Jerusalem. It is contrary to United Nations Security Council resolutions and to the spirit of the declaration principles. We and our European partners have already pointed that out.

**Mr. Batiste:** My right hon. Friend will recall that, at the time of the agreement between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation, many Arab states made substantial promises of aid. Does he agree that that aid, and the economic prosperity that it can buy for the Palestinians, is the best defence against extremism? What assessment has he made of how much hard cash has come from the Arab states in fulfilment of those promises?

**Mr. Hurd:** I certainly believe that the flow of help for Mr. Arafat, now that he has administrative responsibilities, from his Arab brothers has been disappointing. They still have disagreements with him—as, indeed, do we because of his stance in the Gulf war—but it is important that he should be sustained in his efforts to run the Gaza strip, Jericho and eventually the rest of

the west bank in a reasonable and business-like way. We have given him support and help in that, and the Arab world should do likewise.

**Mr. Murphy:** Does the Foreign Secretary accept that the economic and financial aid package given in Paris last week to Gaza and to Jericho must be used for specific projects which will produce specific jobs and, therefore, improve the quality of life of people living in that region?

**Mr. Hurd:** I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his appointment to the Opposition Front Bench. I entirely agree with him. The total European package—which is in addition to the British package, to which we have added from time to time—totals 500 million ecu over five years. It is for specific projects—education, housing, technical assistance, the rehabilitation of those who have been detained, and support for private enterprise in the territories.

## Iraq

5. **Mr. Clifton-Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of whether UN sanctions against Iraq should remain in force. [20417]

**Mr. Hurd:** The United Nations Security Council can modify sanctions against Iraq only when it is satisfied that Iraq has complied with the relevant United Nations resolutions. The Iraqi Government know what they have to do. We look to them for early action. We are deeply concerned about the plight of the Iraqi people. Working closely with the United States and Argentina, and in response to concern expressed in several quarters in the House, we have secured the unanimous adoption of United Nations Security Council resolution No. 986. That would allow Iraq to export substantial quantities of oil in return for aid. We look to the Iraqi Government to accept the resolution and thereby to help to alleviate the suffering of their own people, for which they are so clearly responsible.

**Mr. Clifton-Brown:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that Iraq's failure fully to comply with United Nations resolution No. 687 on co-operation in relation to weapons of mass destruction and on peaceful intent, together with human rights violations and the failure to agree on small sales of oil to give humanitarian assistance to the people of Iraq, mean that the Government should do their utmost to persuade the international community to retain sanctions?

**Mr. Hurd:** That is the position at the moment. My hon. Friend rightly draws attention to the outstanding points. With regard to weapons of mass destruction, I draw particular attention to biological weapons, on which much remains to be done, and to possible nuclear research programmes.

**Mr. Hardy:** Is the Foreign Secretary aware that Turkey does not appear to have responded to the suggestion by many informed observers that there has been some sort of understanding or agreement between Turkey and Iraq over the recent incursion by Turkey into northern Iraq, which is said to be aimed not only against terrorism but at the oil facilities there? Does not the absence of an explanation by Turkey or Iraq suggest that more care should be taken before there is any relief of the present sanctions? What information does the Foreign Office have about that?

**Mr. Hurd:** The hon. Gentleman has been ingenious in bringing that subject into the scope of the question. We have spoken to the Turks expressing our concern about their incursion into Iraq. Turkey has explained the reasons, which have nothing to do with sanctions against Iraq or oil facilities but are concerned with its struggle against the PKK in south-eastern Turkey. Turkey has begun to withdraw and I hope that that withdrawal will be completed as soon as possible.

**Sir David Steel:** I accept the Foreign Secretary's description of current events in Iraq, but will he bear in mind what the UN Secretary-General wrote in his position paper presented to the Security Council in early January? He said that the object of sanctions was

"not to punish or . . . exact retribution",

and that they raised the difficult question whether they were

"a legitimate means of exerting pressure on political leaders whose behaviour is unlikely to be affected by the plight of their subjects."

Surely that is the dilemma that the Government face.

**Mr. Hurd:** That is indeed the dilemma, which is why we have acted to find a sensible way through it and to show again, more comprehensively—more generously, one could say—that the Security Council is willing to allow Iraq to sell oil even under its present Government, provided that the proceeds are used partly for compensation and partly to feed the Iraqi people and to supply them with drugs and medicine, and not for other purposes. That seems a perfectly sensible way through.

**Lady Olga Maitland:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that there should be no question of lifting the sanctions on Iraq until it has complied with all United Nations resolutions? I refer in particular to the resolution relating to the 625 Kuwaiti prisoners of war and missing persons still held in Iraqi prisons after all these years. What progress is being made in that regard?

**Mr. Hurd:** Not enough. My hon. Friend has taken a keen personal interest in the problem for many years, and she is right that any relaxation of the import embargo will depend on the Iraqi Government's complying with all the resolutions, including those concerning the Kuwaiti detainees still unaccounted for.

## Kashmir

6. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will support efforts by the European Union to encourage Pakistan and India to hold direct talks on Kashmir; and if he will make a statement. [20418]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tony Baldry):** We have taken a leading role in encouraging India and Pakistan to resolve their problems over Kashmir by bilateral dialogue, as provided for under the 1972 Simla agreement. Our line is closely reflected in the position taken by the European Union.

**Mr. Cox:** I note and welcome that reply, but what discussions have the Minister and our European partners had with the Indian Government in an effort to stop the continuing abuses of human rights by Indian security forces in occupied Kashmir? If the Indian Government should attempt to hold elections in that area this year,

what criteria would the Minister expect to be observed to ensure that the elections were really free and fair and that the result represented the views of the people of Kashmir?

**Mr. Baldry:** As the hon. Gentleman knows, we have repeatedly made it clear that human rights abuses in Kashmir have to stop, as does any support for armed incursions into Kashmir, and those responsible know to whom we are speaking. We have consistently encouraged India and Pakistan to resolve their differences through talks together. I am glad that yesterday India and Pakistan agreed to resume talks on Kashmir, which is good news. The President of Pakistan and the Prime Minister of India met and agreed that outstanding problems had to be resolved through peaceful means and that there was no insurmountable barrier to resuming talks, which is very good news.

**Mr. Jessel:** Before any such talks can make sensible progress, is it not essential that military terrorism should cease? As we used to say of Northern Ireland, one cannot successfully negotiate under the shadow of the bomb and the bullet. Should not Pakistan be discouraged from training and sending so many young men to a useless death?

**Mr. Baldry:** As I have made clear on many occasions, for there to be progress on Kashmir there has to be an improvement in human rights in Kashmir, a genuine political process in Kashmir and the clear cessation of external support for violence in Kashmir. Above all, there must be a dialogue between India and Pakistan. It is good news that that dialogue at last seems to be starting.

**Mr. Rooker:** Notwithstanding the announcement that the Minister made about the discussions yesterday, may I ask him to redouble the British Government's efforts on the issue? It is not a problem of two faraway countries: it affects the very heart of communities in this country. When people from that divided part of the world hear about the constant repression of their families and more distant relatives, it makes for bad community relations in this country. It puts pressure on people, who take a more militant approach because of the diplomats' failure to solve the problem by peaceful means. There is a continuing danger that the matter will continue to fester within our communities in this country unless we redouble our efforts to bring about a peaceful solution.

**Mr. Baldry:** The hon. Gentleman and the House will be reassured to know that Ministers spare no opportunity to encourage both sides to resolve their differences through bilateral negotiations. The point that the hon. Gentleman makes—that many people in this country have an interest in what happens in Kashmir—is well understood. That is why we wish to see progress made on Kashmir. The only way in which long-standing progress can be made on Kashmir is if the people of India and Pakistan talk and resolve the matter together.

## Nuclear Weapons

7. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next plans to meet his overseas colleagues to discuss treaty obligations regarding nuclear non-proliferation; and if he will make a statement. [20419]

**Mr. Hurd:** I spoke to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty review and extension conference on 18 April. For 25 years the treaty has been the cornerstone of our efforts to prevent proliferation and it has succeeded in limiting the number of states with a nuclear weapons capability. We therefore want to make the treaty permanent by agreeing in New York its indefinite extension. That is supported by all states of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Europe and north America, and by a growing number of the non-aligned states. To help ensure a successful outcome, we have made a number of moves on security assurances and on ceasing the production of fissile material for explosive purposes.

In the negotiations for a comprehensive test ban treaty, we have dropped our requirement for nuclear tests in exceptional circumstances—the so-called safety tests. The moves that we have made underline our strong commitment to achieving progress on disarmament and maintaining the non-proliferation treaty as an essential guarantor of international security.

**Mr. Fabricant:** I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his full and comprehensive answer. Is not the world a far less safe place now than it was 10 years ago? Is it not irresponsible for certain Members of the House of Commons to say, as the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) did only yesterday, that now is the time for this country to disarm unilaterally? Does that not make my right hon. Friend's job more difficult when it comes to negotiating the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, and do not such comments demonstrate—following the debate in Westminster hall on Saturday—that the Labour party is just a rabble without a clause?

**Mr. Hurd:** I will not seek to emulate my hon. Friend. I noticed the remarks of the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) in the House yesterday, when he said that nuclear weapons were "expensive, immoral and unjustifiable". That used to be the view of all his party. It is only fairly recently that the Labour party has come to support the Trident programme, as we do.

The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) has made some cloudy remarks in the past few weeks which suggest that he is moving back towards his traditional position in line with the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and the hon. Member for Islington, North. Perhaps in our exchanges here the hon. Member for Livingston will be able to show how far and how fast he is moving backwards.

**Mr. Corbyn:** Does the Foreign Secretary agree that it would be far better if the non-proliferation treaty were renewed only for a limited period, to allow the nuclear weapons states the opportunity to decommission and get rid of their nuclear weapons as a contribution towards world peace? Does he honestly think that Britain equipping four Trident nuclear submarines with a total of 376 warheads is anything but a belligerent act in a world that is desperately looking for peace? Would we not be better served by saying that we will abandon the cost and use of nuclear weapons as our contribution to world peace?

**Mr. Hurd:** We have had an argument on this matter in this country—and rightly so—year after year. I do not say that there is a consensus because the hon. Gentleman is not part of one, but there is an overwhelming feeling that we need to maintain a minimum—and it is a minimum—

are not there in sufficient strength or with adequate equipment to remain in circumstances of all-out civil war, is it not of the essence that we retain the closest links with the United States, whose role would be crucial in arranging for any safe extraction of allied forces from the former Yugoslavia?

**Mr. Hurd:** My hon. Friend is quite right in his analysis, and we do so.

**Mr. Menzies Campbell:** In a period of reduced defence expenditure throughout Europe, will not the provisions of the Maastricht treaty in relation to

"a common foreign and security policy"

be underlined and encouraged by economic pressures, such as inter-operability, common procurement and forced specialisation?

**Mr. Hurd:** I did not entirely follow the hon. and learned Gentleman, possibly because his question is more appropriately addressed to Defence Ministers, but if I find something useful about which to write to him on this subject, I shall do so.

### Land Mines

12. **Mr. Hendry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has held with his EC counterparts on formulating a common policy regarding the export of land mines. [20429]

**Mr. David Davis:** As my hon. Friend will have heard me say already, on 10 April the Foreign Affairs Council agreed a proposal for joint action on land mines. The joint action includes a European Union-wide moratorium on the export of anti-personnel land mines—identical in scope to our own moratorium—joint efforts to strengthen the UN weaponry convention, and support for demining.

**Mr. Hendry:** I thank my hon. Friend for that clear answer. The House will welcome the fact that Britain has taken the lead in that matter and that other Governments in the European Union are now following it. In view of serious concern around the country about the export of land mines and in the light of a misleading recent television documentary, will my hon. Friend take this opportunity to tell the House exactly what the moratorium covers and why?

**Mr. Davis:** My hon. Friend is right about the misleading information. I originally announced our national moratorium on the export of anti-personnel land mines in July 1994. On 15 March, I extended its scope and it now comprises a total ban on the export of non self-destructing or non-detectable anti-personnel land mines, because those are the most dangerous to civilians, plus a ban on the export of all anti-personnel land mines to countries which have not ratified the weaponry convention.

### Intergovernmental Conference

13. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects to hold discussions with members of the EU reflections group on future IGC priorities for 1996. [20430]

**Mr. David Davis:** The first meeting of the study group is on 2 June in Messina.

**Mr. Dykes:** I wish my hon. Friend well in those discussions, as he is our participant. The two Members of the European Parliament who came before the Select Committee on European Legislation last week for the hearing repeated, with emphasis, that deepening—

**Mr. Skinner:** Another word for federalism.

**Mr. Dykes:**—was very important and would be a leading feature of the discussions—they anticipated that, anyway. I do not know whether the reverse is true, since they also said that that would mean the increasing use of majority voting. Can we show some enthusiasm for that and try to keep up with them?

**Mr. Davis:** It is always a nice feeling to know that my hon. Friend is behind me on these matters. No, I cannot agree with him about the views expressed by the two Members of the European Parliament who came to speak to hon. Members last week. Oddly, I find myself agreeing with the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) that deepening, to some extent, is a synonym for federalism and, as such, we shall not be supporting it.

**Mr. Barnes:** Will the reflections group be reflecting on the means of overcoming the democratic deficit, such as increasing the powers of the European Parliament and controlling those of the Council of Ministers? All Parliaments could do with taking powers away from their Ministers.

**Mr. Davis:** I do not agree with that last comment. The democratic deficit, as it is described, is interpreted in many different ways. We take the view that the most important action that can be taken is that already outlined by the Prime Minister at Leiden; to try to bring the national Parliaments into a bigger role in the European Union.

**Mr. Wilkinson:** Can my hon. Friend reflect on the tremendous wave of support which would rise up throughout the country were Her Majesty's Government's representative at the reflections group to press for the recovery of powers and competencies to this Parliament and to this Government, which we ought never to have lost to Brussels? Above all, can he seek through the reflections group the recovery of the primacy of British law over European law?

**Mr. Davis:** What I can say to my hon. Friend is that I am sure that all aspects of the European Union will be discussed at great length in the reflection group. Matters such as the balance of powers between national Governments and the Union will be discussed.

### Angola

15. **Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the timetable for the deployment of the full UN peacekeeping force in Angola. [20432]

**Mr. Baldry:** The British logistic battalion began to arrive in Angola on 16 April. With our assistance, the main United Nations Angola Verification Mission force is due to deploy as from next week.

**Mr. Bayley:** I welcome that answer. The Minister will be aware that the Secretary-General has said that the

infantry contingent of the peacekeeping force will be deployed in stages. Will the Minister assure the House that we will press for it to be deployed quickly so that the Lusaka protocol arrangements do not unwind? Does he agree that the peacekeeping process needs to be underpinned by a reconstruction programme? Who will be representing the British Government? Will we be represented at the highest level at the conference in Geneva in two months' time to discuss the reconstruction programme? Will the British overseas aid programme contribute to the reconstruction programme in Angola?

**Mr. Baldry:** The whole purpose of having a 600-strong United Kingdom logistics battalion is to help the deployment of the infantry as speedily as possible. Our men there, and the excellent job that they are doing, are much appreciated and valued. Of course the hon. Gentleman is right to state that the process must be underpinned by reconstruction. That is why we have allocated more than £24 million of emergency assistance from the overseas development budget to Angola since the UN appeal in June 1993. Angola is now the last remaining country in southern Africa to be brought back into democracy. We obviously trust that the UN operation will help to restore peace and to bring about reconciliation there.

## Eritrea

16. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on United Kingdom relations with Eritrea. [20433]

**Mr. Baldry:** Our relations with Eritrea are good. We have followed closely developments since independence and have urged the Eritrean authorities to continue to work towards the adoption of a democratic constitution.

**Mr. Battle:** After 30 years of war, Eritrea became independent about two years ago. That was a moment of great liberation and hope, not least for the half a million refugees in Sudan. Since independence, some 80,000 of them have been rehabilitated and have returned. What can the Minister do to help the other 480,000 who cannot return because of the shortage of funds to help them to be rehabilitated and reintegrated into Eritrea? Would not one practical step be for the Government to reverse their 30 per cent. cut in British contributions to the European development fund which helps Lomé countries, of which Eritrea is the latest member?

**Mr. Baldry:** As the hon. Gentleman knows, we have a substantial aid programme. At £2.2 billion, it is the sixth largest aid programme in the world. We also have a very substantial bilateral aid programme. Every £1 that we spend multilaterally is £1 that we cannot spend bilaterally. The way in which we spend our bilateral funds is extremely worth while. For example, it enabled us last year to spend £100,000 specifically on improving port facilities in Eritrea to enable Eritrean ports to cope better with the high 1994 food import requirements. We spent £6 million of our bilateral aid programme on general and specific aid for Eritrea last year, which Eritrea very much appreciated. If that money were to be spent on multilateral projects, it would not be available for us to spend, as we would wish to, bilaterally. I am sure that the House would wish that money to be spent well bilaterally—as indeed it is.

**Mr. Harry Greenway:** Does my hon. Friend estimate that the flow of Somali refugees to Eritrea, or to other parts of the world, has slowed down or finished as a result of the more peaceful situation in Somalia or is the reverse the case?

**Mr. Baldry:** Eritrea has had difficulties with Somali refugees and with Eritrean refugees in Sudan. We are ready to help with the process of returning Eritrean refugees from Sudan. I am glad to say that I think that the situation with Somalia has now stabilised.

## United Nations

17. **Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the total annual contribution of the United Kingdom to the United Nations; and what assessment he has made of the return received on that investment. [20434]

**Mr. Goodlad:** In the UN financial year 1994, we contributed £305 million to the United Nations system. We are satisfied that our financial commitments to the UN are justified by the importance of its role across the entire range of international activity.

**Mr. Winterton:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that £305 million is a substantial sum of taxpayers' money? Will he advise the House how that sum is allocated to the different United Nations budgets? Will he assure the House that the energy and determination that the Government have shown in reducing bureaucracy and inefficiency in the United Kingdom and within the European Union will be matched by their determination to ensure that that large sum of money is spent effectively by the United Nations not only in our interests but in the interests of the world as a whole?

**Mr. Goodlad:** Yes. The breakdown of the United Kingdom's total contribution of £305 million is £34.8 million as the assessed contribution to the United Nations regular budget, £129.8 million as the assessed contributions to the United Nations peacekeeping budgets, £52.2 million as the assessed contributions to the United Nations specialised agencies, and £88.2 million as voluntary contributions to various UN programmes and activities that we support. Additionally, we spent £120 million in the United Kingdom financial year 1994-95 in respect of British participation in UN peacekeeping operations, of which £50 million has been reimbursed.

We have supported efforts at the United Nations to root out and eliminate fraud and waste. These include the establishment in September last year of the office of internal oversight services, which was mandated specifically to look into that matter. We shall continue to make every effort to ensure, as my hon. Friend rightly says, that those moneys are well spent.

**Mr. Gunnell:** Does the Minister agree that £305 million, in terms of the overall Government Budget or even the budget of his Department, is a relatively modest sum, given the role of the United Nations? What have the Government done to support current UN work and work by UN agencies in Rwanda? What are the Government able to do or to support to prevent a further outbreak of the dreadful killings that we saw in that area recently?

**Mr. Goodlad:** The hon. Gentleman describes £305 million as a modest amount in the context of my Department's budget. As he will know, my Department's budget is about £1.2 billion, including the cost of the

World Service of the BBC and the British Council. That is quite a substantial sum of money. My hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) is quite right; it must be well spent. We have made our contribution in Rwanda, and I hope that, in due course, our contribution will lead to a rather happier future for that country.

## Cyprus

18. **Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made in relation to the application of Cyprus to join the European Union. [20436]

**Mr. David Davis:** The 6 March Foreign Affairs Council outlined the circumstances in which negotiations with Cyprus will start six months after the intergovernmental conference.

**Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** I do not wish to make a delicate situation more delicate, but does my hon. Friend see any scope in the present circumstances for putting on pressure in certain quarters to ensure that there is an equitable solution to the problem within Cyprus before any application to join the European Union is processed?

**Mr. Davis:** Like our partners in the European Union, we believe that the best sequence is for a settlement in Cyprus to be followed by accession, and we shall make every effort to achieve that. The Foreign Affairs Council agreed that accession should benefit both communities and promote a settlement. We support that, too.

**Mr. John D. Taylor:** As membership of the European Union by Cyprus is clearly in practice dependent upon an internal settlement, and as the recent presidential elections in northern Cyprus have resulted in the election of Mr. Denktash on the basis of a policy of support for the United Nations confidence-building measures, what representations will the Government now make to the President of Cyprus to obtain his support for the United Nations confidence-building measures?

**Mr. Davis:** As I have already said, we shall take every possible measure to advance the process. Of course, the confidence-building measures are a large part of that.

**Mr. Lester:** Does my hon. Friend agree that, although we all want to see Cyprus within the European Union, it would be a tremendous anomaly—given that the basic principle of the EU is free trade between partners—to suggest that Cyprus should be admitted when the Cypriots do not even trade with one another?

**Mr. Davis:** My hon. Friend sees exactly why we consider the best sequence to be settlement of the problem, followed by accession.

## South Africa

19. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the frequency and subject matter of current Government contacts with the Government of South Africa. [20437]

**Mr. Baldry:** We maintain close and frequent contact with the Government of South Africa, at all levels and on a wide range of subjects.

**Mr. Hughes:** I congratulate the South African Government on their first year of democratic all-party government, and celebrate that. Will Her Majesty's Government make it clear, however, that the worst possible scenario during the next few years—while the new constitution is worked out—would involve the coalition parties not only not speaking to each other but reaching such difficulties in their internal relationships that we would risk the breaking up of South Africa as a result of the intransigence of either the Inkatha Freedom party or any of the coalition parties? That is now an increasing possibility.

**Mr. Baldry:** Clearly, the people of South Africa must make their democratic institutions work, and, clearly, there will be difficulties from time to time. We must trust the maturity of the elected representatives in South Africa, and their determination to make democracy work, to see them through occasional sticky patches in the first few years of democracy. By and large, the maturity that they have shown so far bodes well.

**Mr. Rathbone:** Will my hon. Friend remind the House of what the British Government are doing to help the various communities in South Africa build a team spirit and work together for the future of their country?

**Mr. Baldry:** We are devoting £100 million of development aid to South Africa—£60 million bilaterally, and £40 through the European Union. We are supporting education projects, small-enterprise business development and sport. On Monday, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister hosted an event at Downing street for an impressive range of United Kingdom companies and others, specifically to sponsor sport and sporting activities in South Africa. Across the board, we are supporting the new, emerging South Africa. We are the largest investor in new business and trade in the country, and we are determined for it to enter the 21st century as strong and self-confident nation.

**Mr. Robert Hughes:** The Government know full well that the development and sustaining of democracy in South Africa depends largely on the development of its economy, and that of neighbouring countries. Why, then, are they cutting their contribution to the European development fund by 30 per cent., thereby putting at risk the prospect of development in which the Minister says he believes?

**Mr. Baldry:** First, the hon. Gentleman clearly did not listen to my earlier answer. Secondly, he does not seem to appreciate that the Lomé agreement does not cover South Africa. As I have said, we are giving £100 million in aid to South Africa, £60 million of which comes from our bilateral budget. If we devoted more aid to multilateral spending, by definition that would mean that less could be spent from our bilateral budget: less could be spent on countries such as South Africa. I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman and many of his hon. Friends completely misunderstand the way in which the Lomé and EDF operate.

## Nigeria

20. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what measures his Department is taking to persuade the military regime in Nigeria to hand over power to the elected President. [20438]

**Mr. Baldry:** We condemned the annulment of the presidential elections of 12 June 1993 and the subsequent ousting of the civilian interim national Government. The measures against the military announced in 1993 by the European Union and the United States remain in force. We continue to consult closely with our partners and with a wide range of political contacts in Nigeria. We continue to urge the Nigerian military Government to implement an early and peaceful transition to civilian democratic rule.

**Mr. Bruce:** I thank my hon. Friend for his answer. I am sure that he will agree that Britain is a great friend of the Nigerian people, and that it would be wholly wrong for us to abandon them to their fate.

The Nigerian military Government possess all the dictatorship features of military Governments. They had set up the presidential elections under rules approved by themselves, but they then annulled the result. What more can we do to press the Nigerian Government to allow the Nigerian people to have their elected President in office?

**Mr. Baldry:** Our position is clear and straightforward. We continue to be concerned by events in Nigeria, where there is an urgent need for progress towards accountable civilian government. We deplore all human rights abuses, which contradict the Nigerian Government's declared commitment to make early progress towards democracy. It is essential that all detainees are subject to due process, and are either charged or promptly released. My hon. Friend can be confident that we will spare no opportunity to press upon the Nigerians the need to have early elections to restore the democratic Government.

**Ms Abbott:** Does the Minister agree that Nigeria's population and wealth mean that internal stability in that country is essential to the future of the whole region? When will the British Government press the Nigerian Government to release Chief Abiola from prison—where his medical condition is deteriorating badly—and to endorse him as the democratically elected president?

**Mr. Baldry:** We have been pressing the Nigerian Government to do exactly that, and also to ensure that political detainees are either brought to trial or released speedily. We also want the speediest possible return to a democratic Government in Nigeria. I cannot believe that there are any differences among Members about the need to achieve that as speedily as possible.

## Bosnia

3.30 pm

**Mr. Robin Cook** (Livingston) (*by private notice*): To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will a statement on the breakdown of the ceasefire in Bosnia and its impact on the UN.

**The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd):** The cessation of hostilities agreement which, as the hon. Gentleman said, provided for a ceasefire in Bosnia, ended without extension on 1 May. There had been a steady increase in fighting and skirmishing between Bosnian Government troops and Bosnian Serbs since 20 March at a number of flashpoints along the confrontation line.

The end of the cessation of hostilities agreement in Bosnia on 1 May has not so far been marked by any new heavy fighting on the ground. The situation has not yet returned to levels of violence or difficulty experienced last autumn. It is true that the gradual deterioration and the restrictions on freedom of movement have made it more difficult for the United Nations Protection Force to carry out its tasks in areas near the confrontation line. There is no fighting in most of central Bosnia, where, the House knows, most of the British troops in UNPROFOR are deployed.

I shall add a word about the situation in Croatia, which has taken a sharp turn for the worse. Croat forces moved into western Slavonia on 1 May, and in two days' fighting have taken control of the central highway and expelled forces of the Krajina, or Croatian, Serbs, who retaliated by launching five or six missiles into Zagreb. The Croatian Government announced on 2 May that they had completed their operations, but the situation remains tense. There were further explosions in Zagreb this morning, and I have just had reports of continued hostilities in Litija in the western sector and at the town of Karlovac, south of Zagreb.

Early on 2 May, the Security Council adopted a statement that expressed deep concern at the resumption of hostilities, demanded that the Croatian Government end their military offensive, and offered full support to the Secretary-General's special representative, Mr. Akashi, in his negotiations to secure a ceasefire, to ensure the safety of the highway and of UN personnel, and generally to bring the situation back to normal. His efforts continue.

What is happening in both Bosnia and Croatia shows again the urgency of the political process. A negotiated settlement remains the only way to a lasting peace, whether in Bosnia or Croatia. No party will win a decisive military victory, and that is as true now as it has ever been.

The Contact Group is continuing its efforts to secure a settlement in Bosnia based on its plan and mutual recognition among former Yugoslav republics. The immediate priority in Bosnia is to secure a further ceasefire, or cessation of hostilities agreement. The Bosnian Government in Sarajevo have indicated that they could agree to that if President Milosevic recognises Bosnia. So, in its meetings this week, the Contact Group is focusing on that aspect.

The House will realise at once that recognition of Bosnia would be an important step, and would signify an end to Serb dreams of a greater Serbia, but it is one element only in a general and overall package that must include recognition of the other republics, settlement on territory and agreement on a constitution of Bosnia that preserves the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

**Mr. Cook:** The House will share the Foreign Secretary's grave concern about the danger of a deepening war and the simultaneous breakdown of the ceasefire in Bosnia and the renewed conflict in Croatia, and will be determined that troops must not be exposed to unacceptable risk.

May I join the Foreign Secretary in condemning the unprincipled rocket attacks on Zagreb? The deliberate use of anti-personnel bombs against women and children is not a courageous act of war, but a cowardly act of terrorism. There can be no justification, however, for the Croatian Government's military conquest of a UN-protected area. Does the Foreign Secretary accept that the easy success of that action may renew doubts about the UN's resolve to defend protected areas in Croatia and its safe areas in Bosnia?

May I remind the right hon. Gentleman that, last month, the UN representative in Bosnia stated that the UN would use air power if civilians in safe areas were attacked? Is he aware that the only use of air power in Bosnia since then was the bombing last week of civilians in Bihac, as the ceasefire deteriorated? Why was there no response to that breach of the no-fly zone, and is there not a danger that, in the absence of any response, the Serbs will conclude that we were bluffing once again?

On the conflict in Croatia, will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that President Tudjman of Croatia is due to arrive here on Saturday to represent his country at the Victory in Europe celebrations? Do the Government still think it appropriate that the celebration of peace in Europe should be attended by a Government who have just broken the peace? If so, will our Government take the opportunity to impress on President Tudjman that there must be no further military assaults on UN-protected areas?

Finally, can the Foreign Secretary confirm that the European Union is in discussions with Croatia about granting it associated status on trade? Is it not a condition of those discussions that Croatia accepts that UN troops should remain in place in the protected areas, and does not its invasion of one of those areas make a mockery of that undertaking?

Does the Foreign Secretary see any prospect of peace for the peoples of the former Yugoslavia unless the UN can command respect from their political leaders? Does he really believe that we can build that respect for the UN if we give favoured trade status to a Government who are openly challenging the UN's authority?

**Mr. Hurd:** The hon. Gentleman got the balance of comment right between the rocket attacks on Zagreb and the Croatian invasion of sector west. On the use of air power, I think that he was suggesting using NATO air power not against the Croats in sector west—that could not sensibly be considered—but in the Bihac pocket. Clearly, the use of air power by NATO has proved its good sense, and there have been occasions when it has worked. That is why, from time to time, we have said, "Yes, it is available."

Whether it is sensible to call down air power in particular circumstances or at a particular time must depend on the judgment of the commanders on the ground as well as that of the NATO authorities—that is the dual key—but particularly on the judgment of the former.

The hon. Member is correct about the invitation to President Tudjman, who was invited here some time ago for VE day. He accepted the invitation. We are keeping it under review in light of what is happening, but the hon. Gentleman's second comment may well be right, and it might be a useful opportunity to ram home to President Tudjman the Government's views and those of this House about the risks he is taking and the dangers, he is incurring, for his people as well as for his neighbours.

The same applies to the hon. Gentleman's point about the desire of the Croatian Government for closer relations with the European Union. We support that, but the pace and the way in which it goes ahead must depend on the Croatian attitude to the peace process, as he said. Clearly, that has been put at risk—indeed, it has taken a downward spin—during the past few days.

**Mr. David Howell** (Guildford): Does my right hon. Friend accept that there is now no peace to keep, in either Bosnia or Slovenia, and that therefore the position of our troops doing their gallant humanitarian work must be kept under daily and even hourly review to ensure that they are not exposed to a vastly increased range of risks? Given that the combatants, certainly in Bosnia, will not stop killing each other until they are deterred by each other's strengths, is he still convinced that an uneven supply of weapons to the two sides is the best stance to support at this stage?

**Mr. Hurd:** There is peace in central Bosnia, where our troops are, albeit a ragged peace, which has been increasingly infringed since March. In Gorajde, there are difficulties of supply but no daily fighting. As my right hon. Friend said, we must ask ourselves what would happen if we pulled our troops out. The judgment of those who have visited the area recently is that, if we and UNPROFOR as a whole pulled our troops out, the present ragged peace might deteriorate rapidly into total war. Obviously, we want to avoid that.

But as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said yesterday, and as my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) has said, there comes a time when the risks taken by our troops outweigh the benefits they bring. In Croatia, there is not a general war. Fighting has flared up because of the Croatian attack on sector west. It could develop into a general war. We do not have British troops in Croatia, although a number of British staff are employed there in different ways.

On the prospects for peace, I agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford, and have often said in the House, that peace will come to Bosnia not because outside forces impose it but because those doing the fighting decide that they will not gain their way by fighting. An arms embargo is currently applied to all sides. Obviously, it has been breached to a certain extent, probably by all sides.

My right hon. Friend asks whether peace will be enhanced by removing the arms embargo. We think not. Removing the arms embargo would mean the certain withdrawal of UNPROFOR. That is now accepted by most people, and the combination of allowing or facilitating a flow of arms to all sides without inhibition and withdrawing the UN forces would probably be disastrous for all those in the area.

**Mr. Menzies Campbell** (Fife, North-East): The Secretary of State referred to the Contact Group. Will he give the House an assessment of the extent to which the Contact Group is still unified, and all members of that group are doing their best to put diplomatic pressure on those parts of former Yugoslavia with which they may have had traditional affiliation? In particular, may I remind the Foreign Secretary that Croatia obtained early recognition at the instigation of Germany? What efforts are being made to persuade Chancellor Kohl to exercise influence on President Tudjman to show some self-restraint?

**Mr. Hurd:** The Germans are doing that. Indeed, they did that yesterday. In the past few hours, I personally impressed on the Germans the importance of Germany, like all of us, playing our part in the control of the border between the Serbs and Bosnian Serbs.

As the hon. and learned Gentleman knows, there is now a breach between President Milosevic and the Bosnian Serbs. It is important that we should make the best use of that breach, and do our best to satisfy ourselves that there is proper control and that armaments do not pass between Serbs and Bosnian Serbs. If the Germans, Americans, British and French can build up that control force, it could be very useful.

The Contact Group is in one piece, as the hon. Gentleman suggested. It is meeting in London today, and, as I said in my statement, is pursuing the idea that, if President Milosevic and the Serbs recognise Bosnia and then, of course, Croatia, that could be a powerful help to bring about a new cessation of hostilities in Bosnia.

**Sir Patrick Cormack** (Staffordshire, South): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the prime responsibility for our remaining on the brink of an all-out Balkan war rests with Serbia and its repeated violations of the United Nations charter and resolutions, including the violations which led to the seizure of Croatian territory?

Does my right hon. Friend recall that, on a number of occasions in the House, I have pressed him and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister for a meeting at the highest level of Heads of Government and Heads of State on the Yugoslavian conflict? Does he not now accept that the time has come for the Prime Minister, the President of the United States and the President of France, when elected, to sit down together and seek, as permanent members of the Security Council of the United Nations, to try to bring about a settlement?

**Mr. Hurd:** The historical responsibility for the events of 1991 and 1992 rests most heavily on Serbia. The present position is different. President Milosevic has accepted the Contact Group plan—that is to say, he has accepted the territorial integrity of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The people who have consistently obstructed that are the Bosnian Serbs, with whom President Milosevic is now in dispute—Mr. Karadzic and the so-called assembly in Pale. Now the situation is complicated by the Croatian attack on sector west in Croatia.

My hon. Friend is perfectly correct. He has urged a summit meeting, and so indeed have others—the Russians and the French, from time to time. It may well be that that could, at the right time, bring things to a head. But a summit meeting for its own sake is not magic. The essential is to find a means—the ideas and the pressures—to bring together those who are responsible for ordering and encouraging the fighting, and show them ways in which they can consult their own interests and their own advantage best by a peaceful negotiation. A summit meeting may at the end be part of that.

**Mr. George Foulkes** (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): I agree with the Foreign Secretary that the problem can be resolved only through discussion. Will he pass on the thanks of the House to Mr. Akashi for the work that he has already done, and will he take up with the Secretary-General the possibility of intensifying the role of the United Nations in mediation?

**Mr. Hurd:** I am not always grateful to the hon. Gentleman, but I am on this occasion. The role of the peacemaker is always easy to mock. Peacemakers, diplomats, get into aeroplanes and hurry about. They are not dramatic or heroic. Drama and heroism have their day, and, by heaven, they have had their day in Bosnia. If the torment of these peoples is to be brought to an end, it will be because of the patience of the peacemakers.

**Sir Peter Fry** (Wellingborough): Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is clear that the Croats do not accept the present situation, that the Bosnians do not accept the present situation, and that there are very few Serbs who have any intention of giving up any of the ground that they have occupied? In those circumstances, is it not clear that UN diplomacy has failed so far, and we must admit it?

Does my right hon. Friend accept that I am perturbed by the talk that there has been of further concessions to the Serbian Government which, apparently, have done nothing more than bring about the end of the ceasefire? I hope that there will be no more talk of further concessions until we make real progress towards peace.

**Mr. Hurd:** Certainly the peacemakers have failed up to now, and so have the warmakers. It is the failure of the warmakers that brings this suffering upon the Croats, the Bosnian Government, the Bosnian Muslims, and the Serbs, and has cut off all those peoples from the future of Europe.

All the peoples of the former Yugoslavia except Slovenia are living in a time warp: they are living in the Europe of the first decade of this century and the last decades of the previous century. They are not part of what is happening now in the way of reconciliation, reconstruction and the making of a new Europe. That is what the warmakers have imposed upon their peoples. So the UN has to go on trying. My hon. Friend is right to say that it has failed so far.

No, there is no question of further rewards being given to the Serbs in return for nothing. There has been a temporary suspension of certain sanctions against President Milosevic and his Government, because he accepted the Contact Group plan and because he has gone a long way to sealing his border with the Bosnian Serbs. But if there are to be further concessions, that has to be because of further progress, and I have suggested the lines that we think that that should take.

**Mr. Peter Shore** (Bethnal Green and Stepney): Accepting that the breach between Serbia and the Bosnian Serbs is an important potential step forward and can be used to make a peace more certain, is it not a pity that, at this stage of the game, the Foreign Secretary and others should be putting forward a proposal to President Milosevic that he should now recognise the borders of Bosnia-Herzegovina? Is the Foreign Secretary making a distinction between recognition of the Government of Bosnia-Herzegovina and recognition of its frontiers?

**Mr. Hurd:** I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will not press me too far down a diplomatic path that is strewn with terminological difficulties. If—I shall not try to elaborate the phrase—President Milosevic in Belgrade clearly recognises Bosnia-Herzegovina, that puts to rest a lot of fears. It could lay the foundation for a new cessation of hostilities, and then for discussion about territory within Bosnia-Herzegovina and constitutional arrangements—the sort of links that could exist between the Bosnian Serbs and the Serbs in Serbia, just as they could exist between the Bosnian Croats, the Bosnian Muslims and Croatia.

**Mr. Nicholas Budgen** (Wolverhampton, South-West): Does not all the discussion of the details of this horrible civil war and all this grand but ineffectual lecturing give the impression that we are responsible for these horrible events? Is it not now time that the Government recognised that a British national interest never existed in the battle in the Balkans, that the British people are not prepared to risk either their treasure or their troops in the Balkans fight, and that the sooner we disengage the better?

**Mr. Hurd:** As my hon. Friend will acknowledge, I have made it clear over the years not only that we are not responsible, either as Britain or as a part of the European Union, for this tragedy, but that we cannot solve it from outside. I have repeated that again today, although my hon. Friend does not always seem to listen. He belongs, and has always belonged, to the school of "let them fight it out", which is opposed to the school of "something must be done". Over the years, I have had a bit of impatience with both those powerful bodies of opinion.

There are certain things that we cannot do, and should not pretend to do. One of them is to impose a just peace—or an unjust peace—on a particular part of the Balkans. But there are things that we can do, where we can save lives and get aid through, which is what we are doing.

The British have carried more than 20 per cent. of the entire United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' airlift to Sarajevo. Our Overseas Development Administration lorries constitute 25 per cent. of the convoy fleet. Our engineers have provided shelter for 20,000 refugees. There are 350 gas, water and electricity projects. Our engineers have built the bridge connecting east and west Mostar after the devastation there. They could not have done it without the presence of troops to help. To say that Britain should not do the things that it can do must be wrong.

**Mr. David Winnick** (Walsall, North): Does the Foreign Secretary recall the sense of outrage felt by people in this country,—as well as, obviously, by people in many other countries—when the capital of Bosnia and other towns were subjected to continuous shelling by the Serbs? Is it not a fact that, to some extent at least, those areas were designated as safe areas by the Security Council because of the feeling of outrage in Europe?

Will the Foreign Secretary now tell the House whether it is the intention to make it perfectly clear to the Serbians that those safe areas are safe areas, and that military means will be used? Otherwise, the Serbs will take the point that they have always taken: if no action is taken against them, they will continue their aggression. I have never been a believer in appeasement.

**Mr. Hurd:** The hon. Gentleman has not been following recent events very carefully. What has happened, both in

Croatia and in Bosnia, in the past few weeks is that there have been attacks on the Serbs—first in Bosnia by Bosnian Government troops since the end of March, and more recently by the Croatians against the Serbs in Croatia. The Serbs have retaliated, disproportionately and brutally, as they have done in the past. That is the situation with which the Security Council and Mr. Akashi have to wrestle.

**Sir Anthony Grant** (Cambridgeshire, South-West): One supports all the diplomatic work being undertaken, and of course the humanitarian work done by the British forces, but is the Foreign Secretary aware that, if that appalling and tragic mess escalates, there can be no justification for putting even one British service man's life at risk? Will my right hon. Friend therefore give a positive assurance that, if the situation should escalate, British troops will be withdrawn without delay?

**Mr. Hurd:** That is what the Prime Minister said yesterday. We are not there yet, but obviously there could be circumstances in which the risks to our troops and to other United Nations troops—I am sure that my hon. Friend would not expect us to withdraw unilaterally—would become such that they had to withdraw. As my hon. Friend knows, there is NATO planning for that eventuality. Those concerned with ordering the fighting should not take for granted the presence of our troops or of the other United Nations troops.

**Mr. Mike Gapes** (Ilford, South): In view of the invitation to President Tudjman to come to this country to commemorate the victory over fascism, will the Foreign Secretary study an article in a Croatian magazine, called *Magazine*, by Dinko Sakic, who was the commander of the Jasenovac concentration camp, where 10,000 Serbs died, from 1941 to 1945? That man describes Tudjman's Government as a flowering of Croatian freedom parallel to the Pavelic dictatorship, which was the ally of the Nazis.

**Mr. Hurd:** I do not think that the parallel between that Croatian regime and President Tudjman's Government is an exact one.

**Mr. David Sumberg** (Bury, South): Notwithstanding my right hon. Friend's comments about unilateral withdrawal, will he make it clear that the overriding priority is the safety and security of British troops, and that if he comes to the conclusion that that safety and security is in jeopardy, notwithstanding other countries' attitudes, he will bring our troops back home?

**Mr. Hurd:** Except in circumstances that it is hard to foresee, I do not think that the House is likely to support a unilateral British withdrawal, especially as our troops sit astride the main communications line from Split into Bosnia. However, the position is as the Prime Minister stated it yesterday, and a similar position has been taken by the French and Canadian Governments and others.

We keep the situation under review all the time, but we believe that our troops and the rest of the United Nations force are playing an essential part in preventing the present fighting from escalating, dominating the whole country and plunging Bosnia back into the kind of war that existed before United Nations arrived. That situation might change. As my hon. Friend says, the risks to our forces could increase until they became unacceptable. In that case, they would have to withdraw, and planning for that possibility is in hand.

**Mr. Dennis Skinner** (Bolsover): Does the Foreign Secretary realise that it is not good enough to attack those whose views are different from his as being in favour of a fight to the finish? Does he recall that, about two years ago, when Germany wanted to recognise Croatia straight away, in the initial stages he stood at the Dispatch Box and took a different view, but that then he suddenly changed his mind? Why was there a change?

Some pundits, including Lord Carrington, say that the British Government changed their mind and decided to recognise Croatia, thereby emboldening the people there to take affairs into their own hands, because of a deal on two Maastricht opt-outs. The Government are partly to blame for the mess that we are now in.

**Mr. Hurd:** If the hon. Gentleman is seriously suggesting that Lord Carrington made that accusation, he is entirely wrong.

**Mr. Skinner:** I saw him on the telly.

**Mr. Hurd:** Lord Carrington would have preferred to delay the recognition, but the suggestion that it was linked to Maastricht comes entirely from the hon. Gentleman's own fevered imagination. There was no such connection.

Historians will argue about the timing of the recognition of Croatia and Slovenia, but no one could seriously suggest that it could have been long delayed. No one could seriously suggest that we could have gone on pretending that the old Yugoslavia still existed. We must deal with realities, and the reality was that Croatia existed. Whether it should have been recognised in the autumn, which was what the Germans wanted, or at the end of the year, which is what happened, or a little later, is a matter for dispute, but it is not relevant to the present.

**Mr. Iain Duncan Smith** (Chingford): Is not our real problem that we find ourselves dancing on the head of a pin? The war has escalated—it is not a case of when we will make decisions about troop withdrawals. The British troops are situated in the middle of a zone of war. The Croatians have more than $300 million worth of arms, many of which came from the former east Germany after the unification of Germany.

The concept of an arms embargo has utterly failed. We now have troops stationed out there who, to my mind, are serving less and less purpose. The food that is shipped out to those areas is mostly being used to feed the fighting troops. We must have a policy of limiting diplomacy; it is now time to say that we shall withdraw by a certain time and that, unless something specific happens, those troops are certainly on their way out.

**Mr. Hurd:** There are no British troops in Croatia. We are dealing with the position of British troops in Bosnia. The position that we have arrived at after much thought and review is as I have stated. Of course, we look at the position all the time. As I have said, those concerned—who may well, as my hon. Friend said, to some extent profit from the help that we bring to the civilian population—should not take the presence of British forces or the United Nations force for granted.

**Mr. Bill Walker** (Tayside, North): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the United Nations forces have neither the numbers nor assets in the former Yugoslavia to conduct anything remotely like an organised campaign? The indiscriminate and unwise use of air power, however

*[Mr. Bill Walker]*

well intentioned, could lead to circumstances that would make the position of the troops on the ground untenable. Therefore, is it not about time that we began to recognise that history has shown that civil wars of that sort can go on for many years, and are rarely resolved by outside interference?

**Mr. Hurd:** I agree with my hon. Friend. The question is not whether one can resolve a civil war from outside, because one cannot, unless one is prepared to send in an imperial army and impose a solution. No one in this contest has been willing to do that. Those who have talked most about it have tended to do least about it.

We have done what we can, and we continue to do so. We shall go on doing that as long as we believe that our effort is worth while in reducing suffering and preventing a Balkan war from escalating out of control—it is very much in Britain's interest to prevent that.

**Mr. Nicholas Winterton** (Macclesfield): When will we learn from history? While the United Kingdom clearly has a role in helping the Muslim Government of Bosnia-Herzegovina, am I not right in saying that it is the Russians who could intervene to influence the Serbs, and the Germans who could intervene to influence the Croatians? What role is either Germany or Russia playing in the negotiations to bring about a ceasefire? Clearly, from what we read in the press, they are very much taking a back position when they should be taking a forward position.

**Mr. Hurd:** No, I think that the Germans were the main influence in persuading President Tudjman to accept a renewal of the United Nations force. As I said earlier, they were active yesterday in restraining the Croatians from further military interventions. My hon. Friend's analysis is right—the Russians have been active with President Milosevic. I have sometimes wished that they would be more active. It is correct that both Russia and Germany have been historically, and are now, powerful influences on the Croats and the Serbs.

**Lady Olga Maitland** (Sutton and Cheam): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the real key to peace lies in Belgrade? Will he urge the Contact Group to extend its efforts to persuade President Milosevic to use his influence on Karadzic? After all, despite the stresses and strains between the two men, there is a strong link. We should not forget that it was Milosevic who encouraged and supported the war in the first place. Can my right hon. Friend possibly tell us when the next meeting with the Contact Group will take place?

**Mr. Hurd:** As I said, the Contact Group is meeting today. It has been in touch with President Milosevic frequently, not least through our chargé d'affaires in Belgrade, who has a good relationship and good communication with Milosevic. I agree with my hon. Friend: the more one looks at the present situation, the more one asks how peace will come about. I believe that it will come about by mobilising the full pressures that President Milosevic and the Serbs could bring against the Bosnian Serbs, so that there can be acceptance on the basis of the Contact Group plan and real discussions within that plan of territory and the constitution of Bosnia.

**Mr. Ian Bruce** (South Dorset): My right hon. Friend will know that the deployment and the length of deployment of British troops within the former Yugoslavia has caused problems of overstretch within the armed forces and the appropriate types of armed forces which are sent forward. Does he agree that the Government's decision to start a third armoured reconnaissance regiment, which they promised to base in Dorset, is a welcome improvement? Will he urge his colleagues in Cabinet to get on and fulfil that promise as quickly as possible?

**Mr. Hurd:** I think that my hon. Friend has asked me to trespass a little. I will certainly pursue his point where it can usefully be pursued.

I should like to add one point which has not yet emerged from these exchanges. Of course, the British Army goes where it is sent. It does not choose where it goes. Right hon. and hon. Members who have visited our troops lately in Bosnia have come to the conclusion that the officers and men have no doubt that they are pursuing an extremely useful and important task in the interests of Britain.

**Mr. John Wilkinson** (Ruislip-Northwood): Can my right hon. Friend assure the House that, in the event that the end of the ceasefire heralds a further escalation of the fighting in Bosnia and throughout the region—an escalation which ultimately imperils the security of our troops on the ground—prompt authorisation will be given by NATO commanders for the use of air power in the defence of our own troops, if required, without interference or delaying tactics on the part of the United Nations? The certainty of a swift response is crucial in these matters.

**Mr. Hurd:** My hon. Friend will be the first to acknowledge that General Rupert Smith, the commander of UNPROFOR on the ground, must have a say in that. We cannot have NATO intervening from the air on some sort of report which is not validated by the British general on the ground, when it is the safety of the UN forces which the whole exercise is designed to promote. That is the case for the dual key. My hon. Friend is perfectly right to say that it has not always worked well in the past. I hope that it is being brisked up now. NATO cannot and should not proceed without some regard to the advice from the ground.

## Points of Order

4.8 pm

**Mr. Mike Watson** (Glasgow, Central): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. On 19 April, I submitted a question for Question Time this afternoon. It was accepted by the Table Office. I put it into the draw, and it was drawn as No. 10. It then went to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Only yesterday, in a letter dated 2 May from the parliamentary relations unit at the FCO, I was given notice that it had been transferred to the Overseas Development Administration.

I find that a matter of concern on two points: first, that it should have taken so long to transfer the question—literally until the day before questions were due to be answered, so that I was left high and dry; secondly, that the content of the question, which related to the Palestine National Authority, should have been treated as a matter solely for the ODA.

On those two issues, I wonder whether it would be possible for you to investigate? I feel that such action should not be taken under the name of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

**Madam Speaker:** On the latter point, I am sure that the hon. Gentleman understands that it is for Ministers to determine whether a question should be transferred. However, I regard it as self-evident that any transfer of a question, especially an oral question, should be made as quickly as possible.

In this instance, I consider that the hon. Gentleman has a legitimate grievance. The transfer of an oral question that has been on the Order Paper for two weeks to be made the day before the question was due to be answered is quite unacceptable. I expect the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to apologise to the hon. Gentleman and ensure that such a practice does not recur.

**Mr. Denis MacShane** (Rotherham): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. In a written answer, the Prime Minister has unilaterally announced significant changes in the rules governing the disposal of papers from No. 10 Downing street. He states that private and perhaps political papers may be retained by the Prime Minister when he retires, but that public papers must remain the property of the state.

The Prime Minister's private billets doux will perhaps not command much interest as a lottery prize—

**Madam Speaker:** Order. What is the point of order for me?

**Mr. MacShane:** Given the great public interest in this matter and the interest of historians in full access to all papers from No. 10 Downing street, is it in order for such a decision to have been announced in a written answer, instead of being reported to the House in a statement?

**Madam Speaker:** The short answer is yes. The House knows that it is for Ministers themselves to determine how statements are made. It is not a matter for the Chair.

**Mr. Dennis Skinner** (Bolsover): Further to the point about the personal files of previous and present Prime Ministers and others, I should like to announce that, if anyone such as the Prime Minister is interested in selling personal files, there is a car boot sale in Bolsover on Sunday.

**Madam Speaker:** I shall bear that in mind; I happen to be free on Sunday.

## Coercion in Family Planning (Prohibition)

4.11 pm

**Mr. David Amess** (Basildon): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to make it unlawful for any Minister or Crown servant to assist any programme which involves forced abortion, forced sterilisation or coercive family planning.

I had hoped to be making this speech following a trip that I was due to make last week to Hong Kong and China. The trip would have been under the auspices of Christian Solidarity, and was to have been with two United States congressmen. Sadly, although the Chinese authorities granted me a visa, they decided at the last minute—for whatever reason—to withdraw the visas for the two congressmen. However, I hope that we shall be able to make the trip later this year.

It has come to my attention that the short title of the Bill has caused some confusion among colleagues, so I say straight away that the purpose of the Bill is not to argue the rights or wrongs of abortion policy in the United Kingdom, or, indeed, in any other country where abortion and family planning are matters of personal choice. My own stand on such issues is well known in the House, but the issue covered in the Bill should unite those who think as I do on the general issue of abortion and those who take the opposite view. Indeed, a measure such as this was successfully introduced in the US Congress in 1985.

The objective of the Bill is to prevent any financial or political complicity, albeit unwitting, by Britain in compulsory abortion, contraception or compulsory sterilisation. Compulsory abortion, the forced use of contraception and the denial of a woman's right to choose to have children is precisely what has happened on a substantial scale in China over the past 25 years, under the "one family, one child" policy.

That that should happen at all is bad enough, but what is even less acceptable, and what I seek to persuade the House to reject, is that such practices should be endorsed, encouraged or defended by any organisation in which Britain has a participative interest.

The Bill would prohibit British funding for forced abortion and sterilisation in China. It will send a clear message to Peking that British or western support can no longer be used as an argument in favour of the mass abuse of fundamental human rights.

The Bill would not have any effect on family planning programmes based on full information and choice. Indeed, it would not even affect programmes that offer incentives to contraceptive use, whatever my private views on the issue might be. The Bill is concentrated solely on programmes that are based on coercion. I say again that I am interested only in preventing programmes that are coercive and based on the bullying and intimidation of women—the very antithesis of free and fully informed choice which should be the hallmark of every programme to which we as a nation give money.

The Chinese population control programme has already been the subject of all-party concern in the House. Early-day motions were signed by hon. Members of all political views and of different views on abortion. The United Nations declaration on human rights guarantees all the right to

"freely found a family and decide the numbers and spacing of children".

The Chinese are signatories to that declaration, yet Canzinghong, the Chinese Minister for Family Planning, has commented:

"The size of the family is too important to be left to the couple. Births are a matter of state planning".

Since the early 1970s and the first population high tide, the Chinese Government have therefore trampled parents' rights into the ground, and have imposed birth control on women who simply do not want it.

In this country, we often hear of a woman's right to choose. Surely that implies a woman's right to choose to have children as much as a woman's right to choose not to have children. Under Chinese law, couples are obliged to use contraception until they have obtained a strictly rationed birth permit. The permits are subject to a local quota, which is part of a regional quota decided at national level and handed down by Peking. The law insists that, after the birth of the first child, an IDU must be inserted into the woman, whether it is medically suitable or not. Thousands of women suffer pain, internal injury or death when they try to extract the devices without medical supervision.

Women who manage to evade the draconian laws and to have a second child are subject to forcible abortion and forcible sterilisation. The penalties for disobedience are severe. If one woman evades the law, her factory or collective may lose contracts, and all her colleagues may lose their pay rises. The couple will be subject to fines equivalent to a worker's annual wage. Women who evade forcible sterilisation or abortion by hiding when the Government squads come round will be rounded up on a later night and manhandled into the clinics for operations. The effects of the coercive Chinese population control programme are horrific, in every hon. Member's view.

Infanticide has been reported since population control started. The rural Chinese have a strong cultural prejudice towards having a son. I touched on the matter in the House when introducing a ten-minute Bill through which I tried to persuade the House not to allow sex selection. Under the one-child policy, parents have killed their children if they are girls, to qualify for the birth quota and the chance of later having a son.

Desperate women about to give birth to an illegal child have sought help in a hospital, only to have the child killed immediately after birth by drowning or an injection to the head of the infant. The prejudice for having a son has left whole provinces with a massive imbalance between boys and girls, which I drew to the attention of the House in a previous ten-minute Bill.

It cannot be right that there should be even the remotest suggestion of any western complicity in such a catalogue of horror. It is therefore incumbent on us to ensure that any moneys given to the poor funds of the International Planned Parenthood Federation and the UN's Population Fund are not used for such purposes. I have had discussions with my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Mr. Ottaway) on the role of those two organisations, and he has reassured me on a number of points. Others claim, however, that there is plenty of evidence that the FPA has actively supported the Chinese regime.

Nafis Sadik, the executive director of the FPA, said:

"China has every reason to feel proud and pleased by its remarkable achievements in its family planning policy and control of its population growth."

I do not wish to take a quote out of context. She goes on to say:

"Now China could offer its experience and special experts to other countries."

God forbid. I sincerely hope that the Government will forbid it too.

When the organisations were given evidence, they changed the goal posts on the matter.

*Question put and agreed to.*

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. David Amess, Mr. Michael Alison, Mr. David Alton, Mr. Joe Benton, Mr. Derek Enright, Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones, Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman, Dame Jill Knight, Mr. Thomas McAvoy, Lady Olga Maitland, Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock and Mrs. Ann Winterton.

### Coercion in Family Planning (Prohibition)

Mr. David Amess accordingly presented a Bill to make it unlawful for any Minister or Crown servant to assist any programme which involves forced abortion, forced sterilisation or coercive family planning: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 14 July, and to be printed. [Bill 115.]

## Exports

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—*[Dr. Liam Fox.]*

4.22 pm

**The Minister for Trade (Mr. Richard Needham):** I have an almost infinite capacity to address a empty House when I come to it. I am, by the way, the Minister for Trade and in the past three years I have travelled some 355,000 miles and visited some 40 countries—many of them on three or four occasions. There are two great advantages to being the Minister for Trade: first, no one in the press or in the Press Gallery and very few people in the House of Commons know who on earth I am and, secondly, I do not have to read the demoralising tide of despair about Britain's failings and woes that are heaped from every daily paper on to the breakfast plates of the British people.

I have yet to visit a country where the perceptions of Britain match the image that we seem to be able to portray of ourselves. Certainly, 15 or so years ago, Britain was revered more for its past than its then present or its likely future. Now, wherever I go, everyone I see and talk to wants to know how we have halted the decline of our country and how we are in the process of restoring our fortunes.

The overwhelming majority of countries that I visit are eager to study our industrial relations reforms. Even the developing countries of India, Sri Lanka and China have work forces—well, not so much China, but many countries in the developing world—beset with the restrictive practices, closed shops and union-induced overmanning which work against their ability to attract inward investment from the developed world.

Many of those countries, particularly those in the Commonwealth, inherited those practices from a socialist Britain. That legacy is perhaps the Trades Union Congress's greatest success in export promotion.

**Dr. Norman A. Godman** (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I find the historic analysis of the British industrial relations system interesting, but it does not accord with the facts in relation to many of my constituents who are unemployed shipbuilding workers. My constituency has benefited enormously from inward investment. However, I believe that those rundown shipbuilding yards on the Clyde would benefit enormously if they could join the international shipbuilding market. Will the Minister give a commitment to ensure that the European Union's seventh directive on the shipbuilding intervention fund will continue beyond 31 December this year? That subsidy is absolutely essential for the European Union's shipbuilding industry, let alone for the industry in Scotland.

**Mr. Needham:** I take the hon. Gentleman's point. He will know that, for several years, as the Minister responsible for industry in Northern Ireland, I was responsible for Harland and Wolff. I am no longer responsible for the shipbuilding industry and I cannot give the assurance that he seeks. However, I am sure that the British Government will do all they can in negotiations with their European colleagues to support the British shipbuilding industry to the utmost.

*[Mr. Needham]*

I take the hon. Gentleman's points about the trade unions' history, but I have recounted the facts as I find them on my visits around the world. The hon. Gentleman is welcome to come with me to learn those facts for himself.

Without exception, all the countries that I visit want to learn about the success of our privatisation initiatives. They look with envy at British Telecom which has cheaper telephone calls than Germany, France and Italy. They look also at British Gas where household bills have fallen 20 per cent. in real terms since privatisation, even including VAT. They also look at British Airways, the world's favourite and most profitable airline, and at British Steel, which is one of the world's most productive steel producers.

The rest of the world is flocking to Britain to learn how to emulate us and how to reduce state subsidies and inefficiencies. In 1979, the nationalised monopolies in Britain cost the taxpayer £50 million a week. They now pay tax of £50 million a week. Opposition Members may wish to sit on the Government Benches and promote British trade overseas. However, they have bitterly opposed every privatisation measure. Indeed, the leader of the Labour party claimed recently in *Hansard* that the British people are totally fed up with privatisation—I do not know who he means by the British people; he probably means himself.

Against the background that I have described, such comments sell short the achievements of Britain and the companies that I mentioned. Indeed, they do far more than that. They reduce the prospect of Britain's being able to sell its expertise and experience to those overseas who want it. In my judgment, that shows how woefully out of touch the Opposition are on an issue that is greeted with acclaim in almost every other country, whether it has a Conservative, Socialist or Liberal Government.

The world now sees us as a very different place from that when Labour last sat on the Government Benches. The results are there for everyone to see. The money is where the mouth is. As the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) reminded us, one third of all inward investment in the European Union is made in the United Kingdom. The stock of inward investment stands at £131 billion. In 1979, it was around £14 billion. We attract 20 per cent. of French investment and 13 per cent. of German investment. We attract 40 per cent. of American investment, 40 per cent. of Japanese investment, 50 per cent. of Korean investment and 50 per cent. of Taiwanese investment in the European Union. Not even Mr. Will Hutton, whose words are avidly read by Opposition Members, and the assembled cohorts of economists and commentators from the BBC and *The Guardian* can stop that ever-rising tide of inward investment. The more they whine, the more it comes in.

**Mr. Ken Purchase** (Wolverhampton, North-East): I seek some information about the right hon. Gentleman's remarkable inward investment figures. Will he disaggregate for the House fixed investment coming into this country and investment that, in the first instance at least, is simply acquiring shares through companies?

**Mr. Needham:** I cannot disaggregate it. I am sure that, in his speech, the hon. Gentleman will be delighted with his own disaggregation. However we take the figures, it is roughly 10 times more aggregated or disaggregated than when the Labour party was previously in office. The amount, compared with what other European countries have managed to achieve, shows that other countries have some confidence in what we are doing, which Opposition Members constantly seek to decry.

**Mr. Patrick McLoughlin** (West Derbyshire): Will my right hon. Friend give some figures relating to the number of jobs that inward investment has created? Also, as he has rightly reminded the House of his role in the Government, could he tell us about the trade that is taking place as a result of inward investment?

**Mr. Needham:** Forty per cent. of our manufactured exports are as a result of inward investment in our country. The number of jobs created by inward investment over the past few years amounts to 700,000—350,000 since 1986. In Northern Ireland, for which I was responsible, about 45 per cent. of manufacturing and jobs come from overseas companies. That shows the trust and belief in what we are doing.

**Mr. Michael Fabricant** (Mid-Staffordshire): Of those 700,000 jobs, how many would be lost if the Government adopted the Labour party's policy of involving the social chapter?

**Mr. Needham:** I shall come to the social chapter, as my hon. Friend might have realised, rather later in my speech. My hon. Friend is right to say that joining the social chapter could do considerable damage to inward investment.

After a century of remorseless decline in our share of world trade, that decline stopped. Since 1985, our share of world trade has stabilised. We have 1 per cent. of the world's population and 5 per cent. of the world's trade. In a recent article in the *Financial Times*, Wynne Godley, an economist who has not shown great favour to the Government in the past, said

"that we have a better chance now than in the last 15 years of hitting the gong, is the consequence of the right policies at last having been followed".

The open trading system and the quality and standards demanded by our inward investors are revolutionising British management's attitude to productivity, quality and service. More and more of our industrial base is striving for world quality in world markets.

**Mr. Denis MacShane** (Rotherham) *indicated dissent.*

**Mr. Needham:** The hon. Gentleman shakes his head, but he has only to look at the facts that I have given to realise the truth of what I am saying.

**Mr. MacShane:** I shake my head because I have read with great interest the speech of the right hon. Gentleman's boss, the President of the Board of Trade, to the Institute of Directors last week, when he averred the very opposite—that in many sectors British companies were not of world quality and that world-quality companies were overseas.

**Mr. Needham:** I am so glad that the hon. Gentleman takes such careful note of what my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade and I say. Of course there is more to be done, and I shall refer to that matter. Of course we can never be complacent about our competitiveness. More and more British companies, because of the way in which inward investment has impacted through the supply chain, are improving their quality.

Let me give the hon. Gentleman an example. Some 350 companies in this country are now members of the Japanese Electronic Business Association. All those British companies supply Japanese companies—original equipment manufacturers—in this country, and are now starting to supply original equipment manufacturers in Japan. They are also supplying OEMs in France, Germany, Spain and even Malaysia. There is no doubt that the effects of the opening of the world trading system, and of competitiveness, are being felt increasingly as they improve the quality of Britain's industrial base.

Moreover, our share of world trade has ceased to decline. Our share of Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development exports of capital goods is some 7.2 per cent., compared with 6.4 per cent. for France and 6 per cent. for Italy. There have been massive increases in Britain's sale of capital goods overseas. The DTI has set up capital sector working groups covering telecommunications, water, power, airports, railways, health and education. Baroness Perry, who chairs the education group, estimated the potential opportunities in Britain's education sector at some £4 billion about six months ago; having examined the position more closely, we now put the figure at £9 billion. The number of students coming to this country from Taiwan has risen from 500 five years ago to 10,000. British exporters from all sectors are achieving measurable success around the world.

The 1980s were a decade of radical change and dialectical debate. The 1990s must be a decade of partnership. We must now capitalise on those radical changes of the 1980s by building a strategic relationship with our businesses that—in a world that is "de-layering"—offers them what the mission statement of the Department's trade side describes as the best service to our exporters offered by any Government anywhere in the world. That, in fact, is exactly what we are doing.

All our major markets now have a country strategy and a market plan. Many of those markets now have campaigns: examples are Partnership Korea, Action Japan, Link into Latin America, North America Now and Spotlight Spain. We are increasing the professionalism of all who are employed in trade within the Department. We have established language training strategies. We are increasing the number of highly trained and committed staff in our embassies, from the ambassadors downwards.

Let me say a little about the overseas services offered by our embassies. Britain has a better Foreign Office and a better commercial service than any other country. I am constantly amazed at the knowledge and experience of our ambassadors and their staff overseas. We may not have used them as well as we might have in the past, for various reasons, but I pay tribute to the superb support and help that the Foreign Office gives our exporters.

**Mr. Fabricant:** I am sorry to interrupt my right hon. Friend again. Will he, however, undertake—with our right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary—to lodge a campaign with, for instance, the Treasury to ensure that we have more representation overseas, and more embassies where at present we have none at all?

**Mr. Needham:** Now that my hon. Friend remembers who I am, I can assure him that I shall campaign on his behalf. I do not really need that prod; I assure him that the DTI wants such a development anyway.

**Mr. John Gunnell** (Morley and Leeds, South): The Foreign Office does a very good job in this regard, but does not the role of the embassy change from country to country? In Japan, companies naturally go to the embassy, seeing it as the representative of the United Kingdom; the United States takes a rather different view, and a great deal of work goes out without reference to the embassy.

**Mr. Needham:** I agree with the hon. Gentleman, and the roles of Trade Ministers vary from country to country as well. It is clear that Government meetings and missions led by Ministers are 100 times more valuable in some countries than in others. We must make sure that our overseas posts are adaptable and practical in what they do, and that is the case.

To make the service—which must be the best in the world—operate, the route between the Foreign Office posts and the Department of Trade and Industry must be seamless. We must have the right information technology link-ups and databases to enable companies to become involved. We must be capable of spreading the service out to small and middle-size enterprises all around the country.

We have taken on 100 export promoters from the private sector who have real experience and knowledge of the markets of the world. Those people will also get out around the country through business links—a vital one-stop shop initiative which has been welcomed by hon. Members on both sides of the House—to get the best possible information to companies that are capable of exporting, whatever their size and wherever they are.

Every business that now wants to export can be given immediate hands-on personal advice through the routes which I have just described about what to do, where to go and who to join, and anyone who has a complaint can come straight to me. But all this takes time to build, and it also takes time to build a knowledge of industry among senior officials of the Department of Trade and Industry and the Foreign Office. It takes time to change their culture, and to get them to concentrate on their business clients rather than on Ministers or personal secretaries. It takes time to establish the 80 market plans, recruit the salesmen and teach civil servants how to market, sell and promote.

It also requires leadership and imagination, and a dogged amount of devil in the detail. Changing a culture that has been geared only to provide policy alternatives and administrative correctness takes time. But we are changing that culture by changing the role of the Department and by changing the agenda. It is working, which is probably why no one is here today.

**Mr. Purchase:** It is the Whips' fault that no one is here.

**Mr. Needham:** It is good of the hon. Gentleman to say that, and I shall come to him in a moment.

Almost everyone—certainly Will Hutton and his cohorts—thought that, by now, Britain would be faced with an ever-mounting trade deficit. The reverse is the truth. The volume of our non-oil exports has increased by 12.5 per cent. a year. Our engineering exports in the first quarter of this year are up by 21 per cent. on the same period last year. According to all recent surveys, our export growth record is at an 18-year high. UK

*[Mr. Needham]*

manufacturers have recorded their strongest-ever improvement in export orders. Those details were given by the CBI on 25 April.

What is happening in this country is almost inconceivable. Our economy is growing because of the strength of our exports, and the strength of our exports is based not on the cheapness of our price but on the quality of what we do.

**Mr. Malcolm Bruce** (Gordon): Everyone welcomes the fact that we have a strong export performance at present. Does the Minister acknowledge that that performance is based on the devaluation since we left the exchange rate mechanism from DM2.95 to DM2.24? Is he sure that the kind of export performance about which he is talking can be sustained without further comparable devaluations? Will not that be the proof of our export strength?

**Mr. Needham:** I do not accept that for one moment. The successes in our pharmaceutical, capital goods and automotive industries, and the fact that we export more televisions than we import—an awful lot more than the Germans and the French—do not only result from the value of sterling, although the value of sterling helps. If the hon. Gentleman were in charge of our affairs, he would lock us into European monetary union and would have sterling tied to the deutschmark. I could then pose his question back to him. We have a competitive currency, but the real base of our strength in exporting is the quality of what we produce. The hon. Gentleman knows that the world will not buy rubbish—it will certainly not buy it from a high-cost country such as the United Kingdom.

If the Government know what they are doing on exports, what about the Opposition? I do not ask my first question of the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) personally, because I know him well and he knows what he is talking about. I am not absolutely convinced, however, that all those who have been placed over him—wrongfully, in my judgment—know as much as he does. I would not even contemplate bothering the House with the curriculum vitae of members of the shadow Cabinet [HON. MEMBERS: "Go on."] The Leader of the Opposition was a barrister at Lincoln's Inn and a columnist in *The Times*; the deputy leader, an author, a steward on Cunard passenger liners and trainee chef; the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), a journalist with Scottish Television; the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), a writer, former journalist on *The Times* and defence correspondent for *New Statesman and Society*; the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), an adviser on industrial policy to Albright and Wilson and regional officer of the General and Municipal Workers Union, as was the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw); the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms Harman), a solicitor; the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), the principal researcher for Granada Television; and, the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), a solicitor. I looked in vain through that list of right hon. and hon. Members but could not find one who had done a day's work in any form of business.

**Dr. Godman:** Will the Minister give way to an ex-shipwright?

**Mr. Needham:** In a moment.

I am not sure whether I would entrust the investable savings of my constituents and those of my hon. Friends to people with such scant knowledge of industry and such non-existent personal experience of it.

**Dr. Godman:** This sort of speech is amusing, but many people in Scotland, who are deeply concerned about the loss of oil fabrication orders to Spanish and Italian yards, for example, would like to know whether the Minister for Trade is satisfied that Spanish and Italian yards are not still being provided with hidden subsidies to enable them to compete for those orders. Is the right hon. Gentleman satisfied that the European Commission ensures that such competition is fair, square and above board?

**Mr. Needham:** Clearly, with the hon. Gentleman's knowledge of industry, he would make a shining example if he moved from his present position to the Front Bench. It is always worth having someone with his experience on the Opposition Benches. If there is any evidence of subsidies that do not comply with European Commission rules, the Government will fight as hard as anyone. I hope that the hon. Gentleman's Euro-fanatic colleagues on the Opposition Front Bench would do the same, if they ever got the chance.

The lack of knowledge of Opposition spokesmen about trade and business is also shown in their inconsistencies. Opposition Members have obviously had some amusement at our expense this week, but we can now have some amusement at theirs. Most hon. Members would accept that defence is one of Britain's vital industries and that one of its most important elements is our ability to sell our aircraft overseas.

The Hawk aircraft is a very important element of the latter. I am glad to say that, about a year or so ago, *New Statesman and Society* said of the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark), on the subject of selling Hawks to Indonesia:

> "As for British Aerospace's proposed sale of Hawk ground-attack planes . . . to Indonesia, where the military dictatorship is actively suppressing occupied East Timor, Clark is in favour. South-east Asia needs a stronger security system, he says, and Indonesia must be a part of it."

I questioned the hon. Member for Livingston about a year ago in the House, asking:

> "I wonder whether the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) would also be prepared to put at risk the most successful training aircraft and the jobs that go with it in this country."

He replied:

> "The Minister will appreciate the fact that this is a major humanitarian issue"—

he was talking about Indonesia—

> "whether the number of casualties was 80,000 or 200,000. He will be aware that Hawk aircraft have been observed on bombing runs in East Timor in most years since 1984. What assurances did he seek, before giving export licences, that the 24 Hawks that he approved last year would not be used in the same way?"—[*Official Report*, 11 May 1994; Vol. 243, c. 307-308.]

So, there you are. The problem for the hon. Member for Livingston is that bombing runs by Hawks in East Timor have not been observed in most years since 1984. Indeed, bombing runs by Hawks in Indonesia have never been observed. A Pilger film claimed to show a Hawk bombing Indonesia, but it turned out to be flying over Lincolnshire.

The message is that such behaviour to please Opposition Back Benchers can do untold damage to our ability to sell overseas.

Perhaps the most depressing aspect of the Opposition's lack of coherence is their lack of interest. I accept that my roadshows are often dull and boring and may be of little interest to hon. Members generally. Nevertheless, when I brought my roadshow to the House of Commons, precisely six Opposition Members turned up, despite the efforts of the hon. Members for Middlesbrough and for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mr. Purchase) to galvanise their colleagues to come and see what opportunities they could gain in their constituencies. Opposition Members may have been too busy doing other things but, although my hon. Friends are basically used to a life of idleness and sloth, 60 of them managed to come along and listen to what we had to say. That gives some idea of Opposition Members' interest in trade.

The final evidence of that is that a Labour Government's major platform, as I understand it from travelling round the world at 35,000 ft, would be devolution. What on earth will that do for the confidence of investors in our country? What will it do to galvanise people to increase productivity, competitiveness and trade in our nation if the House spends five years considering its navel and trying to devolve its powers to an endless series of institutions around the country, which would then regulate and interfere with business?

Another aspect that I should mention is Opposition Members' naivety. The hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) was kind enough to say in Korea the other day that, were there a change of Government, the Labour party would continue to follow our policy on attracting investment and supporting exporters, but with two provisos: the introduction of a minimum wage and signing up to the social chapter.

Much has been said about the dangers of a minimum wage and its effect on companies' competitiveness, but what concerns me most is the massive burden that it would put on companies' costs. It would wipe out family credit and the basis on which the state currently supports lower-paid people in jobs that companies can afford to give them. It would place the burden on employers and, because of its knock-on effect on wage levels, its effect on profits in many industries could devastate companies' competitiveness and profitability.

What is the point in Opposition Members claiming that greater capital allowances should be set against profits if they then destroy companies' profits by introducing a minimum wage? If the answer is that the minimum wage would be at such a level that it would not matter, why go ahead with it? The effect of frightening the children will certainly be of no benefit when, in this case, the children will be those who consider inward investment opportunities from overseas.

**Mr. MacShane** *indicated dissent.*

**Mr. Needham:** The hon. Gentleman shakes his head again. He would soon find that many of the investors from the countries that I mentioned would think twice before investing in his constituency.

**Mr. MacShane:** This is a wonderful knockabout political roadshow, but it does not have much to do with the motion.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris):** Order. It is entirely to do with the motion. I am the judge of that.

**Mr. MacShane:** No wiser judge could there be. It is a pleasure to serve under you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

What are the wage levels of inward investing companies from Japan, France and Germany? Are any likely to equal the appalling poverty wages that are now the cause of the minimum wage debate in Britain?

**Mr. Needham:** What does the hon. Gentleman mean by appalling poverty wages in this country? What evidence has he for that? Let me give him an example from an industry of which I have personal experience—the shirt industry in Northern Ireland. Many of the ladies working in that industry have for generations been the breadwinners. *[Interruption.]* It is not funny.

If a minimum wage of £4 an hour were introduced, as has been demanded by the general secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union, it would have a devastating effect on the Northern Ireland shirt industry. If the hon. Gentleman does not believe me, he can come with me and ask those in the garment industry, the multinationals and the local companies. They would have no option but to close their businesses and go elsewhere.

The whole basis of help in low-paid work should be through the family credit system, not putting burdens on the employers which they cannot afford. The hon. Gentleman would have to live with the consequences of a minimum wage. Unless he could find alternative work for those ladies—I do not know what he expects they would do—he would have to live with the unemployment consequences. That can stand up to investigation from any source.

**Dr. Godman:** Will the Minister give way?

**Mr. Needham:** No, I want to get on.

**Mr. Tom King** (Bridgwater): Is my hon. Friend not rather wasting his breath on this matter? What is the point of berating Opposition Members, many of whom know in their hearts that the introduction of a minimum wage and the social chapter, which they have opposed in the past in discussions that I have had with them, would do great damage? But the problem that they face is that that is a union requirement. In the party that poses as the party of one member, one vote, as has now become clear, at their party conference, the policy-making body, 70 per cent. of the votes are with the trade unions. If the Labour party were to come into power, we would have a union-directed industry and trade policy.

**Mr. Needham:** My right hon. Friend is right. That is the trade-off, of course. The trade-off may be fine between the union bosses and the Labour party, but it is not so fine if one happens to be a shirt maker in Derry.

**Dr. Godman:** Will the Minister give way now?

**Mr. Needham:** No, I have given way to the hon. Gentleman twice. The hon. Gentleman can make his own speech. It is not as if we are short of time.

The social chapter poses the simple question—can we or can we not afford it? The answer is that we cannot.

**Dr. Godman:** Yes, we can.

**Mr. Needham:** Having heard what the hon. Gentleman has just said, I think that it would be best if he stayed in his present position. Not only can we not afford it; nor can anyone else in Europe.

UNICE, the European Union equivalent of the CBI, said that it was

"widely accepted today that one of the causes of European companies' loss of competitiveness and the persistence of a high level of unemployment arises from the unduly high level and/or extremely rigid character of social and labour regulations inherited from the past."

In the *Financial Times* in December 1993, the former President of the Commission, Jacques Delors, said:

"a social opt out for Britain would set up one country as a paradise for foreign investment, particularly Japanese investment".

For once, he was right.

**Mr. Gunnell:** Will the Minister give way?

**Mr. Needham:** No, I am coming to the end of my speech and the hon. Gentleman can make his points in his own speech.

The problem with Labour trade policy is that it is the bland leading the blind. If it were ever to come about, it would soon undermine everything that has preceded it.

I close where I began. As I have said, I have travelled some 355,000 miles selling for Britain and there is no greater privilege than to be Her Majesty's Minister for Trade, and no greater enjoyment because we have the world's respect and friendship, the right strategy, the right team and the right policies, and because, once again, when we are selling Britain we are selling the best that the world has to offer.

4.59 pm

**Mr. Stuart Bell** (Middlesbrough): It is always a pleasure to rise at the Dispatch Box with you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the Chair and with the Minister for Trade opposite. It is typical of the incompetence of the Government that they bring their most successful Minister, with the best tale to tell on our exports, to the Dispatch Box on a Wednesday evening before the local elections, with a House that is not empty but less full than usual. That is the difference between the optimist and the pessimist.

The Minister has a good story to tell on exports and trade, and he touched on it in relation to his in-house workings. Those who have followed the in-house workings of the Department of Trade and Industry and who know of its endemic difficulties with Her Majesty's Treasury will understand the progress that he has made in the past two years. That is not just my opinion; it is shared by business men to whom we speak. I do not have the pleasure or honour of flying at 30,000 ft throughout the world as often as the Minister has, but he has a good tale to tell and, as he knows, I am the first to recognise it.

When the Minister talked of a demoralising tide of despair, I thought that he was talking about Conservative Members who are not here tonight, but it transpired that he was talking about the press. He talked about his visits to Anglo-Saxon countries and said that he sought from the Trades Union Congress a legacy of export promotion in relation to the structures that had been left in those countries by British and Anglo-Saxon influence. He will recall, however, that after the last war it was Ernest Bevin who gave the Germans a structure of trade unionism that has lasted for 50 years and served that nation especially well.

**Mr. Fabricant:** The Ernest Bevin model, however, was one of non-demarcation. In Germany, that model involved having one trade union for a whole industry. It was demarcation that destroyed, for example, this country's shipbuilding industry, about which we have heard so much this afternoon.

**Mr. Bell:** I am glad that I gave way to the hon. Gentleman. He knows that I follow his interventions in our debates, but I was looking forward to one three speeches from now. It has taken a while for us to get our trade union structures to their present position. I shall come to the point made by the right hon. Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King) on the influence of trade unions in the Labour movement. The Minister may wish to criticise the legacy of the TUC, but we must remember the legacy to Germany.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Rotherham (Mr. MacShane) has said, privatisation is a good subject for the Government to knock about in the House. When we had United Kingdom plc, revenue and taxes were coming in from British Telecom, British Gas, the water industry and other industries that were doing well. When we sold off those family heirlooms, we lost that revenue. The Minister talks about the enthusiasm for privatisation in other countries. I wonder whether the people to whom he talks look at the pots of gold that are available in share option schemes, the remuneration of directors and the great temptation of turning a public monopoly into a private monopoly, with all the gain that goes with it. We should be cautious when we consider privatisation in the round. Ten years after the event, we should consider the state of regulation of the privatised industries and their need now to be re-regulated and reconsidered in the interests of the consumer. We should be a little cautious before we say what a wonderful success story privatisation is.

The Minister was bullish on the export of capital goods. We are happy that such exports have increased in the past few years, but if there is a distortion in our balance of payments it has been triggered by a surge of capital equipment imports. The country does not have the base to provide the capital equipment to cover growth of 3 to 4 per cent. as we come out of recession. That is not my comment; it comes from the *Financial Times*, which says:

"The recent strengthening in UK company investment appears to have triggered a surge in imports of capital equipment, which were nearly 5 per cent. higher in the three months to January than in the previous three months."

I am not entirely sure, therefore, that our record on capital goods is as good as the Minister says it is. Yes, we are exporting capital goods, but, equally, imports of capital equipment are off-setting that.

The Minister was again selective in his choice of export figures.

**Mr. Needham:** The hon. Gentleman makes an important point. He is right to say we import certain capital goods, such as machine tools, printing machines and plastic moulding machines, but the point that I was making is that our share of capital goods exported to non-OECD countries is greater than that of France or Italy, which are well known as machine capital good producers. We have many other strengths.

**Mr. Bell:** I am grateful for that. I take the Minister's point but, if I may, I shall continue the quote from the *Financial Times:*

"Investment spending tends to suck in more imports than consumer spending, because Britain"—

these are the key words—

"has a relatively small capital goods industry to satisfy demand."

The Minister was buoyant about exports and bullish about the improvement in our exports. Statistics produced by the Central Statistical Office show that in 1994 exports from this country amounted to £135 billion, whereas imports amounted to £145 billion—a visible imbalance in trade of £10 billion or thereabouts. Fortunately for Britain—we recognise this fact—there was an invisible balance in such items as net investment income amounting to £10 billion, which meant that the overall deficit totalled £371 million.

The Treasury forecasts for 1995 and 1996 are that there will be a surplus of £0.8 billion in 1995 and £0.7 billion in 1996. After 17 years of Conservative government, that is hardly an appropriate balance of trade. The Minister may claim, and I give him, the credit for the important increase in exports, but we are importing more. The 1.5 per cent. increase in exports from December to January was matched by a 6 per cent. increase in imports. That is the balance that we seek to achieve in this debate.

When, in his intervention, the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) mentioned devaluation, a few Conservative Members dismissively shook their heads. I do not spend much time reading the 1992 Conservative manifesto at 4 am. I always prefer to read "Das Kapital", and possibly in French as that tends to send me to sleep quickly, but the Conservative manifesto can have the same effect. If my memory serves me right, it stated clearly that inflation could be contained only by staying within the exchange rate mechanism. The point made by the hon. Member for Gordon should not, therefore, be dismissed so lightly.

I shall, in modesty, not comment on the credentials of the members of the shadow Cabinet, which the Minister went through with such meticulousness. I often wondered why I was not in the shadow Cabinet, but now I realise that my curriculum vitae does not read as well as those of my colleagues. The hon. Gentleman talked about inconsistencies. May I enlighten him on the fact that one of the things that Labour Members—certainly Front-Bench Labour Members—seek is compatibility of objectives? We recognise the difficulties in opposition, as opposed to the difficulties in government, and we seek to consider our objectives and to make them all compatible. We believe in full employment. Clearly, therefore, we would not wish Lloyd's to be declared insolvent with the loss of 60,000 jobs. That is one example. The same compatibility of objectives would apply to the aircraft industry and other industries.

When we last discussed the subject we had an interesting debate about the national minimum wage and family credit and about the shirt manufacturers in Derry. The Government made some valid points, and the right hon. Member for Bridgwater mentioned the trade union connection. I assure the right hon. Gentleman and the House that there is no trade-off between our relationships with the unions and the development of our policies. We shall not develop the idea of a national minium wage as part of a trade-off with the unions concerning the internal reorganisation of our party. We support a national minimum wage because we believe in the social justice of that policy. That is the essential fact.

Why is there so much emphasis on the national minimum wage? I have here some recent statistics produced by the Library that show that the average gross earnings of employees in Great Britain increased by 3.1 per cent. in the year to February 1995. The underlying rate, taking account of staged agreements and bonuses, is estimated to be 3.5 per cent. That increase puts the actual level of the average earnings of full-time employees at about £335.60 a week, or £17,400 a year.

If those are average earnings in our country, who could complain about a national minimum wage for those far below that level, who deserve a better chance than they are getting?

**Mr. Edward Garnier** (Harborough): Is that not precisely the point? Those wage increases have been made without the so-called assistance of a national minimum wage, because managers and employees have been able to work out proper rates among themselves. The hon. Gentleman's party seeks to introduce a Government, state-centred imposition. We have seen what happened in Spain and France. How can he possibly argue for a national minimum wage? Will he also bear in mind not only the experience of people in Northern Ireland, whom my right hon. Friend the Minister mentioned, but those who work in the manufacturing sector in Leicestershire, my county? Does the hon. Gentleman not understand that the trade-off involves not the trade unions, because they do not put themselves out of work, but the people upon whom the national minimum wage would be imposed, who would lose their jobs? That would be the trade-off.

**Mr. Bell:** I shall briefly repeat my point about the compatibility of objectives. If we believe in full employment, we are not in the business of making people with low wages unemployed.

One relevant factor in the economic debate is the enormous disparity in the United States between the very rich—and even most people who actually work—and those at the bottom. We should say that we shall not allow that to happen in this country, and that as a matter of social conscience and justice we shall have a national minimum wage that assists those at the bottom end, but that will not have the consequences that have been predicted for the shirt workers of Derry or for individual workers in Leicestershire.

There will be no trade-off with the unions, and there will be a proper valid national minimum wage. I shall return to the social chapter in a moment.

**Mr. King:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for addressing that question, but I do not think that his answer has quite satisfied the House. If employers pay the wage that the job will support and that they can afford, and keep somebody in employment, under family credit the state undertakes to pay the balance. The state takes on the burden of ensuring that people do not live in poverty. If we move to a national minimum wage the employer will be required by law to pay it. The industries that cannot sustain such wages will simply close down and there will be unemployment. I note that, despite all the other assurances in the new clause IV, there is no pledge of full employment.

**Mr. Bell:** We have debated that before. The Minister will recall a debate about Derry that followed a Question Time performance by my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook). We looked into the question of the shirt workers in Derry and the relationship between the national minimum wage and family credit at the time. It was part of the process of debate and dialogue within the party, which will see a national minimum wage emerge properly and to the satisfaction of those who work with it—*[Interruption.]*—but obviously not to the satisfaction of Conservative Members; we recognise the limits of our powers of persuasion.

**Lady Olga Maitland** (Sutton and Cheam): The hon. Gentleman seems extraordinarily sanguine about the effects of the national minimum wage. Will he explain why 1,000 German companies have chosen to come to this country, making massive inward investment, to escape being so severely penalised by the minimum wage?

**Mr. Bell:** My convictions about the national minimum wage arise out of my 17 years' experience of France, where there has been a minimum wage for many years. Unemployment in France is not caused by the minimum wage.

As for the hon. Lady's second point, I should be grateful if she would send me the evidence about those 1,000 companies that have left Germany to set up here because of the national minimum wage in Germany. I should be glad to read and analyse that evidence, and to publish it and send it to the Labour party's various policy bodies, so that they could take it into account.

The Minister vaunted the number of jobs created by inward investment, and his Back Benchers said, "Hear, hear." Let me remind him, again using the statistics issued by the Library on 1 May—not long ago—that although the work force in employment was 15,000 higher in June 1994 than it had been in June 1993, it was still 106,000 lower than in June 1979.

In our country today there are 106,000 fewer workers than there were when Labour left office. Is that not a remarkable statement? Those statistics put into context what the Minister said about the number of jobs created by inward investment in relation to the totality of the economy.

I am not one of the cynics who believe that such debates are arranged on a Wednesday night deliberately, as a kind of fag-end debate. This will be one of the best debates in a parliamentary week that will culminate in the local elections. When I prepared my speech I assumed that the debate had been chosen for tonight to coincide with the appointment of Renato Ruggiero as head of the World Trade Organisation, and his taking up of his post.

It also occurred to me that the debate might have been arranged for tonight because of the meetings taking place in Vancouver between the Japanese and United States Ministers for Trade, to deal with their multilateral arrangements. Or perhaps the real reason was so that the debate would coincide with the annual quadrilateral meeting between Japan, the United States and Canada to review global trade issues.

**Dr. Godman:** As my hon. Friend is talking about inward investment, may I tell him that the more substantial inward investors in my constituency appear only too willing to offer employees reasonable terms and conditions of employment? I shall give two examples, the first of which is IBM, which was brought to Greenock by the late Hector McNeil, the Labour Member of Parliament. The second is National Semiconductor. Those companies are major local employers, and they are perfectly willing to pay reasonable wages and offer reasonable terms and conditions.

**Mr. Bell:** May I please my hon. Friend by reminding him that in the 1970s, as a poor lawyer of modest repute, I went to National Semiconductor at Greenock and saw the plant and the investment, and what the company was prepared to do in our country. That was under a Labour Government, and nobody ever told me that National Semiconductor had come to Greenock because the men did not work well, or that it feared the social chapter or a national minimum wage. The company was there because it believed in this country. I shall develop that theme a little later.

As I was saying, I had thought that the debate might have been arranged to coincide with the "quad" meeting, or so that we could discuss the consolidation of the World Trade Organisation. I hoped that the Minister would discuss with us the unfinished business from the GATT Uruguay round. The meetings that will take place in Vancouver will discuss global rules for foreign investment. I am sure that Ministers will have one eye on that debate and conference while keeping their other eye on the House of Commons.

I shall dwell on the issue of trade in an appropriate and proper context that has more resonance with the public at large. The value of our currency has steadily declined from 1981 to what has now become its lowest point. Our exporters require to be buoyed up by a weak rather than strong currency. The French have become the world's fourth largest exporter. We are the fifth largest exporter, but the Minister does not like to dwell too much on the position of the French. The French position has been achieved on the back of a strong currency within the framework of the exchange rate mechanism.

The Government can advance our exports only by keeping the price of our money competitive. I do not entirely understand why they place so much emphasis on the national minimum wage or the social chapter when the policy that they follow is to keep our goods competitive by consistent devaluations of the pound. In order to have those steady devaluations, they need a higher interest rate than necessary.

The country has picked up the fact that a drifting currency reflects a drifting Government who sail along on a wing and a prayer. They balance the loss in value across the exchanges and they attract money back into the capital account with higher interest rates to stem the inevitable rise in inflation. That is a disjointed and unstable policy, which may increase exports by about 1.5 per cent., but increases imports by 6 per cent. so that invisible earnings must balance the equation and reduce the overall deficit. It is remarkable that that should pass for policy.

As we know, however, in the kingdom of the blind, it is the one-eyed man who is king and in the fool's paradise that seems to be Government Departments Ministers are complacent and have a feel-good factor that is not apparent in the rest of the country. The hon. Member for Gordon touched on the fact that people do not feel good. Since we withdrew from the exchange rate mechanism—the so-called black Wednesday scenario—the

Conservative party has been unable to get beyond 26 per cent. in the polls. Never in the history of polling have a Government stayed within the same low parameter; never did so much confidence ebb away in a single day; never was there a more stark and blatant example of Government failure. That failure was of such a monumental scale that it could not be disguised, even by this Government.

**Mr. Garnier:** What is the Labour party's policy on exchange rates?

**Mr. Bell:** On exchange rates rather than exchange rate—in relation to the yen, the dollar and those currencies currently within the European exchange rate mechanism—we believe—*[Interruption.]* I want to get on with my speech. *[Laughter.]* It is clearly the view—

**Mr. Garnier:** Would the hon. Gentleman like time to think about it?

**Mr. Bell:** We think about it all the time. We think about the relationship of our exchange rate with our exports and what we should do within the framework of the exchange rate mechanism. We think about what we should do when there is a movement within Europe to a single currency. We think about what is in the best interests of our country, not our party. It is not a matter that we take lightly, but something that we think about all the time.

**Mr. Purchase:** Conservative Members clearly do not understand that the strength of any currency is a simple reflection of the medium and longer term of the strength of its economy. We therefore see in our country the falling value of the pound against the mark. If the dollar were not so weak for political reasons—Japanese trade—our exports would not be so buoyant.

**Mr. Bell:** I shall make a final point to the hon. and learned Member for Harborough (Mr. Garnier) that follows on from the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mr. Purchase). It does not signify a strong economy when the Government cannot countenance or dare to re-enter an exchange rate mechanism with a 15 per cent. margin at either side and a 30 per cent. margin in terms of currency.

**Mr. Garnier:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Bell:** I should like to get on with my speech and perhaps the hon. and learned Gentleman can contribute later.

The fruits of devaluation and black Wednesday are dark fruits that turned the entire public opinion against the Government. Yes, there have been rising exports and a rising growth rate, and the Government have been given a happy-hour feeling that will last until inflation and interest rates rise and until other European nations catch up with us, as they are already doing within the framework of the exchange rate mechanism. The Government are desperately anxious to ensure that, as the pound drops in value, interest rates do not rise too much to give us yet another recession. That policy, dressed up in a different garb, has given us two booms and two busts in the past 16 years.

**Mr. Needham:** I hate to bandy statistics across the Dispatch Box because it does not get us anywhere very much, but I must challenge the hon. Gentleman's assertion that exports are rising at 1.5 per cent. and imports at 6 per cent. The volume of non-oil exports is growing at an annual rate of 12.5 per cent. and imports are growing at a rate of 8.9 per cent. That turns what the hon. Gentleman was saying entirely on its head. Goodness alone knows where he got his figures.

**Mr. Bell:** I am always grateful for interventions from the right hon. Gentleman. My figures come from the first release of the Central Statistical Office—reference CSO 95.72—13 April 1995, prepared by the Government's statistical service. On the second page it states:

"In the three months to January, exports increased by 1.5 per cent. and imports by 6 per cent."

Is the right hon. Gentleman objecting to the Central Statistical Office? The paper is not a secret document, but is issued by the Central Statistical Office at Great George street. I think that the Government will regret that they privatised that service. We know the Government's policy; we have seen the Government's policy—it operates on a wing and a prayer and does not achieve the sort of base that will endure.

I had a longer speech prepared, but I am aware that other hon. Members wish to contribute. With your leave, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and the leave of the House, I shall seek permission to wind up later.

I hope that we have quietly, investigatively and using figures from the Central Statistical Office, shown that the Government do not have a policy. They have a pious hope that the illusion that they have created—that, because we have increased our exports, we have strengthened our economy—will last to the next general election. The Government have been seen through since black Wednesday. Holding the debate tonight simply shows that they are not even competent enough to pinpoint their own exports achievements. I notice that the Prime Minister tried to gain some advantage yesterday in Question Time by basking in the glory of the Minister for Trade, but that will not be enough. Tomorrow there will be another millstone around the Government's neck, but the biggest millstone of all will come at the next general election.

5.28 pm

**Sir John Cope** (Northavon): In introducing the debate, my right hon. Friend said that he was fortunate to be the Minister for Trade. I agree, but I also think that the country is extremely fortunate to have him as Minister for Trade. I was very flattered to be mistaken for him the other day by my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant), who has more hair than both of us put together.

I want to draw attention to one particular British export success both because I think that it is worth drawing attention to in itself and because I believe that it illustrates much wider lessons on the subject of this debate. Apart from anything else, it illustrates the message of partnership in the 1990s, about which my right hon. Friend spoke.

The export success that I want to highlight is that of the British Aerospace airbus. British Aerospace is one of the companies that we denationalised, though most people have forgotten that and do not think of it as a privatised company any more. I hope that that means that it will never be in danger again. By any standards, the success of the airbus has been remarkable and the benefits to the British economy correspondingly impressive.

*[Sir John Cope]*

Airbus accounts for nearly 1.5 per cent. of Britain's total manufacturing exports. That is a contribution of over £1,000 million to the trade balance. It is estimated that in the United Kingdom, some 25,000 people work on the airbus in over 300 different British companies. It is estimated that about 125,000 people in Britain are supported by the airbus programme. It is particularly relevant to this debate on exports to point out that the vast majority—over 80 per cent.—of airbus orders are from customers outside the four countries of the partnership. Over 1,250 airbus aircraft have been delivered to over 120 operators worldwide and Airbus Industrie now holds second place in the world's large civil aircraft market and last year actually outsold Boeing.

As an example of the danger of using part-year statistics, as the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) did a few moments ago, I recall that at the Farnborough airshow in the autumn, a high official of Boeing dismissed the figures for the first eight months of the year, in which Airbus had outsold Boeing, and forecast that for 1994 as a whole, Airbus would go back down to 30 per cent. of market. Of course, the trend held up and Airbus outsold Boeing—the first time that any company in the world has outsold Boeing in the large civil aircraft market for 50 years.

**Mr. MacShane:** Would it not be a wonderful example of the strength of the airbus if, as he flies around the world, the Minister could occasionally land in one? Instead, because, I presume, he flies with British Airways, he mainly has to land in Boeing aircraft, because our airline company will not support our aircraft industry by buying the airbus.

**Sir John Cope:** Yes it would.

At the same time, it is worth pointing out that when Airbus started 20 or 25 years ago, Lockheed and McDonnell Douglas were, with Boeing, the big three in the market. Lockheed no longer produces commercial aircraft and McDonnell Douglas has dropped below 20 per cent. of the market, whereas Airbus has risen and taken McDonnell Douglas' place. Those are impressive statistics and the congratulations and, indeed, the thanks of the nation and the House should go to British Aerospace and the other partners in Airbus.

These days, there is never any time for resting on laurels. Instead, it is important to reflect on how that success has been achieved and hence to understand how to build on it. Aerospace has long been one of those businesses in which Governments are inextricably involved and the sad fact is that, in 1969, the Labour Government withdrew from the fledgling Airbus partnership and for nearly the first 10 years we were involved only through the private sector because of the initiative of Hawker Siddeley Aviation.

That mistake by the Labour Government has cost this nation dear. It is the reason why we have a 20 per cent. share, whereas France and Germany have 37.9 per cent. each. At the time the Labour Government withdrew we, like France, were to have had a 37.5 per cent. share and Germany was intended to have the remaining 25 per cent. The fact that the French have retained their large share goes a little way to explain the success of French exports about which the hon. Member for Middlesbrough spoke.

We benefit from Airbus today because of the private sector involvement by Hawker Siddeley on the one hand and the technological skill of our companies on the other. I believe that it is extremely important, and I know that the Department of Trade and Industry realises this, that the British Government do not hesitate again in their commitment to Airbus.

The statement by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence on the future large aircraft last December was very important in that respect, particularly because it said that British participation was conditional on the FLA being under the management umbrella of Airbus. I believe that the Airbus management set-up has been an important contributory factor in its success.

Airbus Industrie itself, the group company, is in a French legal form known as a GIE, or groupement d'intérêt économique, which is required to make no profits and losses but pass them through to partner companies in the four countries. The group company has relatively few employees, most of whom deal with sales, customer services and so on. Partner companies do the manufacturing and most of the basic research and design so that British Aerospace retains for us its full capacity in research and design. Each partner bids for the various blocks of work and carries the costs of the blocks that it is awarded using funds that it provides.

The bidding process—indeed, the whole structure—has proved very effective both technologically and financially. However, the global marketplace, especially in aerospace, remains very tough. The world recession has hacked down airline business and hence orders for airliners. That has coincided with the ending of the cold war, with its effects on military budgets.

The prospects are for a recovery in civil markets because huge increases in world travel are forecast. The DTI forecasts, with a combination of accuracy and very broad margins, a demand for new aircraft of between 14,700 and 18,100 over the next 25 years. The two figures are remarkably precise, given how far apart they are. On any basis, it is a valuable market but competition is fierce, and not only from Boeing. The aerospace industries of Japan, Taiwan and other countries are growing and they are keen to get a share of the market if they possibly can. That is why Britain must make the maximum use of our involvement in Airbus.

We cannot compete in such global markets and keep up our standard of living unless we co-operate with our neighbours. Many countries on the Pacific rim can already compete with us through cheap labour and so on over wide areas of technology and with great skill and determination. The British people will not live better than the people of those countries and have better pensions and social services for the old and unfortunate, better education for our children and better health care for our sick, unless we develop and exploit to the full higher technology industries such as aerospace, where we have the expertise and proven ability to compete.

We have that ability to compete at present but competitiveness is a war that is never over. In the phrase that was used of the Labour conference so many years ago, it has to be fought, fought and fought again. That war must be fought on many fronts—the efficiency of management, the skill and flexibility of the work force, technological innovation through well-directed research and, above all, determination. Those battles have to be fought against

overseas competition but also within Airbus because of the bidding system that I mentioned earlier—the partner companies all want larger work shares.

If we falter, as we did in 1969, others will take up the running at once. It is not just a question of thinking that it is a good idea to go for higher technology. If there proves to be a greater determination on the part of Germany and Deutsche Aerospace Airbus, for instance, than there is on the part of the United Kingdom to attain and keep technological leadership, we shall inevitably slip back. Given the frantic pace of technological advance today, any slowing down can quickly lead to a loss of technological leadership and hence an inability to participate in future partnerships.

I know that it is tempting to say, as some of my hon. Friends and Opposition Members do, that we might be better off on our own. Many companies thrive as sub-contractors to the big boys, and the argument is that we could do the same. That is all very well for some niches, but we must remember that only the partners in Airbus, for example, bid for the main contracts. If we were not in the partnership, we would not be the leaders in wing technology that we are and, if we fell out of the partnership, we should not be in the future.

When the pressures of unemployment are as great everywhere as they are today, the forces of protectionism will remain strong despite the new world trade organisation that is coming into being. It is true that the new world trade agreements, especially that between the United States and the European Union in July 1992, limiting Government support for the development for civil aircraft, make a difference to what Governments can do, but there is no doubt that Government support of every kind remains, and will remain, important.

I greatly welcome the DTI's involvement, with the Society of British Aerospace Companies, in the "competitiveness challenge" and applaud the Government's civil aircraft research and demonstration programme. Launch aid loans have been essential and, incidentally, a good investment by the Government. So far, about 80 per cent. of the launch aid loans for the A320 have been repaid and I am sure that they will be repaid in full with interest and continuing royalties. The Government are also committed to the national strategic acquisition plan for aeronautics.

That all proves the Government's willingness to back the aerospace industry. Doing so is not only desirable for constituencies such as mine in the mid-west of Britain where the aerospace industry is strongest in many respects, but essential for the future standard of living of all our people.

The airbus is a good example of success in international business which can continue. It is a practical example of successful partnership among European countries although outside the EU framework. There is no better example of the fact that Britain can compete in world markets and is now successfully doing so.

5.43 pm

**Mr. John Gunnell** (Morley and Leeds, South): The inward investment programme has been a success. My hon. Friend the Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) was quick to say so, and I agree that we have been successful in attracting inward investment in recent years.

I was surprised that the Minister began by suggesting that, although he would say how well we were doing in terms of inward investment, the Opposition would whine. He implied consistently that inward investment was not welcomed by everyone and that success in this sphere was something on which we take a narrow party political view. I myself worked for a number of years to get inward investment; I therefore recognise success, and I certainly recognise the difficulties sometimes involved in achieving it. The competition is tough. It is amazing that the Minister should say that we wish to decry the investment success that has been achieved.

Clearly, we are the most popular European location for overseas companies. A series of successes has brought other successes in its train, but the task at hand, which has yet to be mentioned in the debate, is how we retain our position. It is not a matter of dispute or party politics—we wish to continue this country's success in attracting investment from Europe, North America and Asia. The parties may see the future differently, but I should have thought that we all want companies to invest in this country. Therefore, to suggest that there is a difference of opinion about wanting to achieve inward investment is not helpful.

**Mr. Needham:** The hon. Gentleman cannot get away with that. I did not for one moment suggest that the Opposition were not in favour of inward investment; I said that their policies would deter it. I know of the work that he has done. However, only four years ago, the Trades Union Congress passed a motion saying that Japanese culture was alien to us. I am pleased to find that that has now been dispensed with. The hon. Gentleman should not gild the lily of what I said.

**Mr. Gunnell:** I shall accept what the Minister says and move on to a different theme.

It is understandable that the Government should laud their own role but they should not downplay that of others. Inward investment is achieved, not by Government policy alone but by a combination of factors and players. Unless the factors and players work together, investment is not forthcoming. Therefore, the way in which we conduct ourselves in the House must be such that it encourages people to work together.

It is also understandable that the Minister uses the success of inward investment as proof of the success of the Government's employment policies. He suggested that the Government's policies were somehow responsible for that success and that those which we have advocated—the social chapter and the minimum wage, specifically—would defeat inward investment and cause us great difficulty. The evidence to support that notion is very slight and, when challenged by my hon. Friend the Member for Rotherham (Mr. MacShane), the Minister could not produce the necessary evidence. I have met representatives of many Japanese companies, none of whom raised that issue with me.

It is absolutely certain that investment in this country is seen as investment in Europe. It is axiomatic that the reason companies come in this country is not only because of the British market but because of the European market. Therefore, Euroscepticism, when pronounced from Southend or Bolsover, is much more very damaging to inward investment. Some companies have become aware in the past year or two of the debate in which some Conservative Members have raised fundamental questions

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about Europe and shown that they do not wish to be part of the European Union. That is the issue raised by potential inward investors.

**Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** I understand why the hon. Gentleman seeks to strike a balance by mentioning Southend and Bolsover, but is not the real cause of worry to potential investors in this country the members of the Cabinet who share the views to which he referred and who are undermining confidence in the Government's policy and shedding doubt on the continuation of the Government's commitment?

**Mr. Gunnell:** That is very much the case. Overseas companies understand and enjoy the role of my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) but they worry that Euroscepticism has taken hold in the Cabinet. They are anxious that we should maintain our position in Europe.

**Mr. Fabricant:** The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right when he says that countries from outside the European Union come to the United Kingdom to invest because we are in the Union. Does the hon. Gentleman accept, however, that we attract 40 per cent. of all investment in the European Union, which now consists of 15 nations?

I suggest that a minimum wage would deter people from investing in the United Kingdom. The hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) more or less accepted that by saying that if Labour were in office, it would set the level of the minimum wage so low that it would not deter investment. The question then rightly arises, as my right hon. Friend the Minister for Trade has asked, what is the point of having a minimum working wage if it is so low that it will have no effect?

**Mr. Gunnell:** My experience from working with Japanese companies is that they generally pay a wage that is considerably above the minimum that we have spoken about, or the minimum wage that has been suggested to us as a possibility by Conservative Members. Many of the companies with which we deal are the stronger companies in their economies; that is almost automatically the case if they are thinking of investing overseas. I accept that labour costs are an important factor for them and that they weigh those costs carefully. However, for the companies with which I dealt, especially the major companies, labour costs here were no problem at all. If one takes on investment from a much smaller Japanese company, labour costs may become a factor. I do not believe, however, that the introduction of a minimum wage would have the startling effect on inward investment that Conservative Members suggest.

It is important that we look at the factors that have brought success because they need to be analysed, at the current state of inward investment because it is changing, and at the need for an inward investment service in the future. As my work was done through the Yorkshire and Humberside development association, which is now known as a development agency, most of the past and future examples on which I shall draw relate to Yorkshire and Humberside.

Having accepted that European membership is vital, I have to say that it is impressive that we have gained a 40 per cent. share of inward investment. Why has this happened? One major factor is completely beyond our control. Our language is an enormous help in attracting investment. English is the first overseas language taught in the Japanese education system because it is seen as so important in the world. In much of the far east, the American influence at the end of the war has led to English being a language that is widely spoken. In much of Europe, it is the second language. The Government cannot take credit for the language factor, which is a major influence in inward investment.

The language factor very much outweighs the other factor that we cannot control—our geographical position. In a sense, we are peripheral. The volume of investment that we have attracted is all the more significant when one recognises that we are geographically peripheral in the Union.

We must look at the factors that are within our control—the decisions made. We must ask whether we are organising our attraction of inward investment correctly, what factors are effective and what could be made more effective. We have been successful because we have managed to bring together the role of central Government through the Invest in Britain Bureau, the role of the regions, either through the Scottish and Welsh development agencies or through the regional development organisations, the role of the local authorities and the role of the private sector. For investment to work, all those four players need to be in place. Our successes have been due to the fact that each has played its part.

The IBB has been effective in terms of financing inward investment. The finance for the IBB is a relatively small part of the DTI budget, but it has been effectively spent. The bureau has operated well in terms of its co-ordination of regional development organisations. Over the past 10 years, there have been many discussions about regional development organisations and about whether they are the right way in which to work.

When I was first involved in attracting investment from Japan to Yorkshire and Humberside, the Minister who was responsible for inward investment was the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont) who subsequently went on to other activities. He twice invited me to the DTI to suggest to me that as a regional organisation, Yorkshire and Humberside development association should spend as little as possible in Japan. He did not believe that one attracted the major Japanese companies by operating on a regional basis. We started off that way.

Subsequently, the policy changed; we were encouraged to spend more time in Japan and that was successful in terms of the investment we brought in. A proper balance has been found between the role of the regions and the role of the centre. That is a matter that must always be kept under review. One has to have co-ordination at the centre—the IBB could do with more opportunity to carry out research—but the marketing must be shared between the centre and the regions. I shall come back to that point.

It is important to involve local authorities actively in inward investment projects. In terms of planning factors, it is true to say that every inward investment which is not achieved by acquisition involves planning factors; that is certainly true of investment on green-field sites. The role of the local authorities is, therefore, important. The regional development organisations have played a big part in getting assistance from local authorities.

All the local authorities with which I have dealt, except one, have been Labour authorities, but there has been no political difference between them in terms of their attitude to inward investment and their willingness to put themselves out, both to meet visitors from overseas and to ensure that where there are planning difficulties, they are ironed out. The role of the local authorities must be recognised; it often proves vital in terms of giving a company the right perception of the area in which they may invest.

It is also extremely important to get the co-operation of the local private sector. In the Yorkshire region, we have managed to get a great deal of financial assistance directly into the regional organisations. We have also managed to get a lot of direct contact between companies coming in to look at the region and the private sector in the region, especially companies on which overseas investors might depend for parts. Most inward investing companies are manufacturing companies so the attitude of suppliers—who are rarely confined to one region—is important.

In many respects, the work in England goes well. We should, however, make a comparison between what happens in the English regional organisations and what happens in Scotland and Wales. The Welsh Development Agency and the Scottish Development Agency can put together a more comprehensive package when they meet companies from abroad than is possible in the English regions. We should look at the difference between the way in which those agencies work and the way in which the English regional organisations work. The fact that the agencies can usually put together a property package and a training package—and occasionally a venture capital package—gives them greater strength in attracting investment.

After the next general election, I expect the Labour Government to ensure that agencies with such a range of ability are also available in the English regions. They have proved effective. It is often important to be able to bring in property and training matters when one is talking with companies about investing in a region. The ability to put together a broader package is sometimes helpful in winning the investment of companies which are considering locating in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands or Germany.

The availability of regional selective assistance is also very important in determining investment. There is obviously a close parallel between investment in the regions and regional selective assistance and its availability. It is important that there is a level playing field in Europe. We achieve such a proportion of investment without a level playing field because of subsidies. Indeed, we do not always manage to create a level playing field in the UK itself, although there have been some improvements in that direction.

When I first entered the area of inward investment, packages available in Scotland and the English regions were certainly disparate. In terms of money, that disparity has been ironed out, but in the English regions there is still a slowness in arriving at a figure to put in front of a potential investor. One of the things that we want from regional selective assistance is a quicker decision, which would enable us to give companies a very clear idea of what they may expect. That can be very helpful in nailing the investment. The quicker the decision, the better it is.

We also have to face the fact that the scene is changing among players on a global scale. First, European enlargement makes some difference to us, especially enlargement to the east. While trying to attract to the UK a motor vehicle company, for example, or a company manufacturing vehicle components, much of the competition in the late 1980s came from Spain. Now much of the competition comes from the Czech Republic. We may say that our costs are lower than those in other countries, but they are not lower than those in the Czech Republic, which is managing to come up with packages which undercut us and that may influence a number of investment decisions.

When we are attracting companies from Germany—there has been increasing interest expressed by such companies recently—factors relating to unification are clearly quite important. A company in west Yorkshire is considering a major expansion which will create another 1,000 jobs. It is comparing the advantages of investing further in west Yorkshire with investing in eastern Germany. Understandably, the German Government will be encouraging their companies to invest at home.

The changing European scene affects inward investment even more in the case of Japan. The Minister was right when he said that we attract 40 per cent. of Japanese investment into Europe, but he will know that according to recent figures published in Japan, we are ninth in the list of receivers of Japanese investment. Of the eight countries ahead of us, the United States is in third place and all the others are from south-east Asia. China heads the list, Taiwan is second and Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia are all ahead of us. Although we still lead European investment, we are well down the Japanese list worldwide.

Japan has shifted in recent years from primarily looking to how it can get into the European market to considering expansion, especially in south-east Asia. That has caused us in turn to look more widely at the Asian market. The particular strength of the yen at the moment has caused some further additional attention from Japanese investors. I am told also, that because a number of motor manufacturers suffered fairly severe losses in the Kobe earthquake, investors have begun to look here again.

We recognise that the United States is still our leading market. In the Yorkshire and Humberside region, there has been particular interest expressed in what may be termed call centres. Financial institutions have made inquiries into the setting up of telephone centres to enable contact with clients all over the country. That would create many jobs.

The scene is changing and we need to consider how to react in the future. It is important to maintain a balance between inquiries dealt with by the Invest in Britain Bureau and those dealt with by regional organisations. I note that in Yorkshire and Humberside, 60 per cent. of inquiries bringing visitors to the country are generated by ourselves and 40 per cent. are generated by the IBB. Although both play a significant role, it is important to nurture the local, regional organisation.

Although regional organisations have received a generous settlement, there is an attempt to freeze the amount of overseas representation of regional development organisations. That may or may not be sensible, but it seems to have been decided without necessary research. Although the IBB funds research into the performance of individual organisations, there does not seem to be any across-

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the-board research. Research into the value of overseas placements for regional development organisations would be helpful in deciding a suitable policy in future. Serious consideration must be given to the effectiveness of marketing the UK as a whole, comparing that with the effectiveness of the separate Welsh, Scottish and English approaches to inward investment.

I want to raise one specific matter with regard to Yorkshire and Humberside: how should inward investment into south Humberside be handled in future? With the change in local government boundaries, Humberside has effectively been split into two: north and south of the Humber. There is no doubt that on any map, Humberside attracts the main inward investment in the Yorkshire and Humberside region. I argue that it is important that Humberside and the Humberside estuary continue to be marketed as a whole.

There are several reasons why Humberside should continue to be marketed with the Yorkshire region. First, the present arrangements have been extremely successful for South Humberside. Of 15 major investments into the region in the past four years, six have been in South Humberside. Over the period, there have been 16 inward investment projects there, creating or saving 1,866 jobs and bringing in £312 million of investment. With regard to new investment in green-field sites, eight new investments have brought in 1,339 of those jobs.

Secondly, there is an accepted need, which the DTI recognises, for after-care for inward investors when they first come into the country. It makes sense for those who have brought the companies in to remain responsible for that after-care.

Humberside county council's economic policy was one of its successes. It has demonstrated that there is a great deal to be said for marketing the estuary as a whole. The estuary has a great deal of potential because there is space. In particular, there is space in South Humberside for the chemical industry which is now unwelcome in many parts of the country.

There is also far less synergy between what will now be called North Lincolnshire and the East Midlands than there is between that area and Yorkshire. As the main means of export to Europe, the Humber ports are a very important factor in our regional inward investment policies.

The new local authorities which have replaced Humberside have said that they want to continue to be marketed through the Yorkshire and Humberside region. Indeed, the Scunthorpe authority has a secondee with the development agency carrying out work in the United States.

The Government should make an early decision to leave the marketing area of the Yorkshire and Humberside development agency unchanged. The strength of the IBB should be maintained, but it should be given the ability to carry out the research and marketing necessary to support the work of the regional development organisations. There should be a review of the IBB's approach to Europe because there are suggestions that it is a little limited in its vision and that too much emphasis is placed on France and Germany while other possibilities for inward investment are not sufficiently explored. For example, inward investment from Turkey is proving very successful in Leeds at the moment and there are several investment projects from Switzerland. It has been suggested to me that, surprisingly, no one in that section can speak a European language other than English.

It is very important to stop putting inward investment at risk because of the electoral tactics being used by the Conservative party. It is quite wrong to suggest that inward investment would fade if there were a Labour Government. That suggests that there would be a lack of commitment towards overseas investment, but that commitment would be just as firm under Labour as it is at the moment.

No company to which I have spoken has described the minimum wage or the social chapter as spectres. In general the companies which are going to take the step of investing abroad are strong and they do very much more than meet the standards of the social chapter.

We went through a period when trade unions seemed to have great difficulty with inward investment, but in the region in which I operated, we soon found that the unions began to compete with one another to be the sole union to sign an agreement with a Japanese company. One of the unions that served a company that we have attracted to the region has said that if it could obtain the same conditions of service for their workers in English-owned companies, they would be very satisfied.

6.14 pm

**Mr. Allan Stewart** (Eastwood): I want to respond to several of the points made by the hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Gunnell) about inward investment. At the beginning, he made a fundamental and important point when he referred to the importance of after-care services. We should regard the decision of a company to invest in the United Kingdom as chapter one of a fairly long book. As the world changes, much of our new inward investment will involve second and third decisions by American and Japanese companies which are already here.

I welcome the title of the debate. It enabled my right hon. Friend the Minister for Trade to make an excellent and entertaining speech. I welcome it also because there is an increasing relationship between trade policy and trade developments and inward investment decisions.

When asked about the Labour party's policy on sterling, the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) said thoughtfully that Labour was thinking about it. He also said that, with the permission of the House, he would reply to the debate for the Opposition. I expressed the hope that his thinking process might have reached a conclusion by then, because that is a fundamental issue.

My right hon. Friend the Minister of State rightly said that the Labour party's only concrete policy is devolution. If there is ever a Labour Government, there would be a Scottish Parliament in the first year of that Labour Government. That would put the hon. Members for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) and for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster), who are both in the Chamber at the moment, in a very interesting position in relation to inward investment.

They would be able to speak and vote on inward investment and trade matters in this Chamber in relation to England, Wales and Northern Ireland, but not in relation to Greenock and Port Glasgow or Paisley. Those considerations would be the responsibility of the Scottish Assembly or Parliament.

If the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow seeks to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he may be able to enlighten us on how he would feel in that situation. He could tell us what Labour's policy would be, with devolution, in respect of two rather important aspects of inward investment—the rate of corporation tax and the level of business rates that would be charged in Scotland.

My right hon. Friend the Minister of State, and the hon. Members for Middlesbrough and for Morley and Leeds, South, underlined the importance of inward investment. I do not need to add to what they said, except to say that, very often, with an inward investment project, the headlines are about the number of jobs. That is the easy headline.

Very often, it is the quality of the inward investment and how it relates to the local economy that is important. I am not always convinced that we achieve the fullest possible advantage of inward investment projects once they are here. However, there is no doubt that our membership of the European Community is a major factor with regard to inward investment projects.

Opposition Members may say, "Well, what about the Government's position on monetary union?" In that regard, I believe that international companies are looking for a common currency, but not a single currency. There is a significant difference between the two. The common currency concept was put forward by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. It has resolved a large number of potential problems. It has not featured much in the public debate recently, but perhaps the Minister will refer to it.

When we look to the future, we all agree that our inward investment policies face an increasingly tough and competitive market. There are four reasons for that. First, as the hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South mentioned, there is the huge and rapid development of low-cost economies in south-east Asia and mainland China. Secondly, within Europe we have two sets of new challenges. I refer to eastern Europe—the hon. Gentleman mentioned Czechoslovakia—and some European countries, notably France, that have come into the market. They were not in that market a few years ago. For a long time, France did not encourage inward investment, but it is now its policy to do so.

Thirdly, because of telecommunications, India is now a major source of inward investment. One can design software in India as easily as in Orkney, Leeds, the Isle of Wight or London. Fourthly, the Uruguay round is bound to make inward investment more competitive. In principle, it is absolutely desirable to lower tariff and non-tariff barriers, but we must face the fact that many inward investment decisions are made because companies want to get behind the tariff barrier. For all those reasons, we face an increasingly competitive market.

I do not want to follow the hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South in relation to England. He made a number of general points with which I agree, but in relation to regional organisations, including those for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, there is the danger of too many cooks spoiling the broth. It is important abroad that the United Kingdom puts its best foot forward. We do not want half a dozen organisations constantly badgering one company—that would put off that company. That is where the co-ordination of the Invest in Britain Bureau, the Department of Trade and Industry and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is very important.

For obvious reasons, Northern Ireland is likely to do much better in terms of future inward investment, and that will be highly desirable for the United Kingdom.

My right hon. Friend the Minister for Export Trade referred to inward investment as a vote of confidence in the Government. It is true that inward investment can take place as a consequence of a range of reasons, but it is the best possible vote of confidence in the Government and in their policies when international, responsible capitalism from America and Japan—the Japanese take very long-term decisions—decides, as it did last year in relation to Scotland, in record terms to invest in this country.

**Sir Donald Thompson** (Calder Valley): Hon. Members may say, "He's just come in," but I have been watching the debate on channel 9. My hon. Friend, who has vast experience, has referred to the whole United Kingdom. Is he struck by the absence of smoked-salmon socialist Labour Members, for whom Jopling was invented, whereas many hon. Members who are present have to travel to all parts of the United Kingdom?

**Mr. Stewart:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. No doubt Scottish Members who are not here and do not have local elections of their own—

**Mr. George Foulkes** (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Order!

**Mr. Stewart:** I am stunned by the sudden interruption by the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes). I am sorry that more Scottish Members are not present. Whatever else they are doing, they cannot be canvassing in the English local elections.

There is consensus in the House on the objectives of investment. There is no dispute about that. The record levels of inward investment that we are achieving are a considerable and meaningful vote of confidence in the Government and their policies.

6.25 pm

**Mr. Malcolm Bruce** (Gordon): We all welcome success within our economy. There is no point in disputing that. The inward investment that we have attracted in recent years has rightly been commented on by the Minister, not just in terms of the share that we are getting but in terms of the dynamic it creates in respect of the spin-off of ideas, the stimulus of competition and the raising of standards. I should not want anybody to doubt that Liberal Democrats welcome that.

However, as for the relative role of inward investment in the total economy, it was interesting to hear the exchange between the Minister and hon. Members about who was trying to run down whom. The Conservative party manifesto of 1979 states:

"At the moment we have the reverse"

of what it was aiming for—

"an economy in which the Government has to hold wages down in order to try to make us competitive with other countries where higher real wages are paid for by higher output."

There is a genuine debate about what a minimum wage, national or regional, might do, what level it should be set at, and what its impact might be. The Minister will acknowledge that the debate about the minimum wage is not central to the attraction of inward investment, because,

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in reality, companies that are investing here have an agenda of their own in which the minimum wage at any level is not a problem.

I say that as somebody who is not convinced of the merits of a national minimum wage. If there is scope for it, it should be regionally varied. I suspect that the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) is heading in that direction, as well.

If our country's investment attractions are so great that we are getting that share of inward investment, why are companies that are already here not showing the same enthusiasm for investing and continuing to invest within the United Kingdom? We must consider the quality of management in the United Kingdom, the climate for long-term security, and the fact that, in recent years, the Government have almost institutionalised insecurity in the minds of business people, investors and employees.

Jobs are not secure. Many businesses have had to secure their investment against property that has fallen in value. They have a lack of confidence that the current low rates of inflation will continue to be low. That in itself is a discouragement to investment when interest rates have to go up.

That brings me to my intervention on the Minister about the exchange rate. When Britain was forced out of the exchange rate mechanism, many Opposition Members, together with the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, were singing in their baths that they had been freed from a terrible constraint, and that that would transform the economy. That might be true in the short term, but in the long term we must create a foundation of confidence, consistency and dependability upon which people can build their plans for long-term investment.

I repeat my challenge to the Minister: devaluation since we left the ERM, from a pound-deutschmark exchange rate of 2.95 to 2.24 now, is not the basis on which to build the confidence that we have a stable economic policy, or, indeed, a stable economic situation.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer postponed his meeting with the Governor—which was to have taken place today—until Friday, for reasons which I suspect we all understand. If you are going to put up interest rates, it may be best to hope that the news will be lost until the day after the local election debacle, rather than ensuring a debacle the day before. The Chancellor acted in the same way after his defeat on VAT, introducing an interest rate rise at precisely the same moment.

The problem is that these creeping interest rate rises are necessary because of the inherent weakness of the economy, and because—despite the benefit of inward investment—the rest of the domestic economy is not performing strongly enough to ensure that we can sustain current levels of growth without inflationary pressures being imported back into the economy. That is the problem, and it is a comment on the underlying failure of the Government's economic policy.

**Mr. Fabricant:** The hon. Gentleman said earlier that there was insecurity in jobs. Does he agree that one of the past weaknesses of our economy was caused by people's promotion into dead men's shoes, rather than through merit? The hon. Gentleman's proposals would return us to that old system, and make the economy weaker.

**Mr. Bruce:** One of the most interesting features of the debates to which I have listened during my 12 years in the House is the fulmination of Conservative Ministers about the incompetence of the management of nationalised utilities, which—according to them—must therefore be privatised. They have not climbed into dead men's shoes; they have stayed in their own shoes, and increased their pay by 1,000 per cent., with no justification and no return on effort.

I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's analysis. People feel insecure about the property values on which they must base their businesses and the security of their ability to retain employment. The inability of people in that state of insecurity to make the purchases that are necessary to sustain a strong purchasing power in the economy contributes, along with other factors, to the underlying weakness of the economy. We have a recovery from a low base, but there is a lack of deep confidence in the long-term future of this country among companies that are based here. If we are to secure long-term indigenous investment, we must deal with that problem.

Cultural changes are required, particularly in regard to property. I was recently asked to address members of the British-German Business Association—representatives of the management of German companies in Britain, some of them British and some German. We agreed across the table on the cultural difference between Britain and Germany—a difference that crucially affected attitudes to investment. In Britain, the first priority was to invest in property, whether domestic or commercial; in Germany, the first priority was to invest in economically productive output.

We agreed that that explained the sustained success of the German economy and the institutionalised paralysis of the British economy—especially in circumstances in which property prices collapsed after a period of artificial boom, which had created an illusion of growth and success that proved unsustainable. We need to deal with such cultural changes, which must go right through our banking system as well as our business system.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Technology (Mr. Ian Taylor):** I have just returned from a visit to Siemens in Congleton. The company stressed that the most notable factor in Britain during the past few years had been a massive increase in industrial capacity, accompanied by investment in that capacity by British companies. Having noted that development, the company had increased its dealings with partnership companies in this country.

**Mr. Bruce:** I am prepared to accept that intervention in the terms in which it was offered; indeed, the Minister for Trade made the same point. There has been a ripple effect from some inward-investing companies: an example is the impact of Nissan on car component suppliers. I recognise that such developments are beneficial, but the figures for the whole of the British economy do not follow through, as it were. The further we are from dealing with pools of inward investment, the less affected we are by them. These things do not happen spontaneously and indigenously.

**Mr. Needham:** What factual evidence has the hon. Gentleman?

**Mr. Bruce:** The Minister need only look at the levels of investment in the British economy across the board in

recent years. They have been lower than in most other European Union member states. As commentators have pointed out for the past 12 or 18 months, investment in manufacturing in the United Kingdom has been relatively static for two or three years.

**Mr. Needham:** It is rising.

**Mr. Bruce:** It is beginning to rise, and no one would deny that that is welcome. However, Ministers cannot rely on short-term fluctuations while ignoring the long-term trends. Those trends show—as do the Government's own indicators—a lack of confidence in the long-term performance of the British economy. They show a lack of confidence in the Government's ability to manage and secure growth without inflation that can justify the level of investment that we shall need if we are to maintain the genuine competitiveness that can sustain our current export success without bringing about renewed inflation or a balance-of-trade crisis—both of which have been hinted at as a reason for the Chancellor's attempt to keep the lid on developments, and a concern that the President of the Board of Trade himself has acknowledged.

I submit that the debate is taking place on grounds with which the Government feel reasonably comfortable, but when the economic picture is put together, it looks rather different. It shows that, successful and worth while though the Minister's story may be, it is not enough to justify the Government's claims that a miraculous turnround has taken place. The Minister's opening remarks about the world beating a path to our door to discuss the successes of privatisation may well be justified in his terms, but the Government have not yet considered how, after privatisation, we are to ensure that we have a genuinely competitive market.

We certainly do not have such a market in gas and electricity—although I am happy to put on the record that, as the Minister will know, Liberal Democrats not only support the current Gas Bill but have been calling for it for years. The legislation is 10 years late. I am puzzled about how Labour could make the statements that they have made over the past two or three days, having voted against it. The Government, however, are now in the process of turning out two nuclear companies in one to ensure a privatised monopoly. There are serious question marks over privatisation: has it really delivered everything that was claimed for it?

The hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) made a passing reference to devolution. I do not wish to dwell on that, but let me point out an anomaly. If the Government are so insistent—as they may be, given the antecedents of the Minister for Trade—that Northern Ireland must have its own Assembly or Parliament to secure its place in the Union, and Scotland must be denied the same to secure its place, that logic will not be easy to sell.

The same question arises: who will be in charge of industrial investment promotion for Northern Ireland—the Northern Ireland Assembly or the Westminster Government? If the Northern Ireland Assembly will be in charge, why should Scotland be denied the same opportunity to promote its industrial development?

**Dr. Godman:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Bruce:** I will not give way. I hope that the hon. Gentleman does not mind; I know that he wishes to make a speech.

Let me make two points that are relevant to my constituency. The oil industry is a major employer and source of investment in my area, and accounts for a significant amount of capital investment. That is welcome; it is established; and, contrary to popular belief, it has a substantial future for many years to come. More challenging waters and developments lie in the future, demanding the application of ideas and technology.

All I ask is that the Government remain mindful of the need to ensure the maximum amount of British involvement in that technology. When there is a decline in oil-related activity around our shores in 30 or 40 years, we will need to be sure that we have established our expertise in that technology. That will enable us to go anywhere in the world and have the foundation of an export business in hi-tech, which will be the long-term yield of Britain's offshore industry.

My second point is that we need a recognition of the importance of the whisky industry, both nationally and locally. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I realise that any mention of whisky reminds Members of the cup that cheers, but it is a serious industry, which—the Minister knows—is one of our major exporters. It is also an important source of employment in rural areas, including parts of my constituency.

There is real anxiety in the industry that changes in the tax system have widened the gap between the cost of spirits here and in Europe, and that that has weakened our export potential and threatened jobs on the ground in Scotland. I only ask the Minister for some feedback, as the Chancellor knows my view perfectly well. That view has been expressed by most Scottish Members. Failing to recognise that the home base is crucial if an industry is to be able to sustain its success is no way to treat a major export industry.

I recently visited the J and B malt whisky distillery in Keith. I was interested to hear that, following the downturn in the whisky market in the United States, Spain has now become its number one market, accounting for 24 million bottles a year. The tax changes of this year were causing real concern about whether the firm could sustain those sales in Spain against the onslaught of home-produced Spanish whisky and other spirits.

The marketing of J and B is astute, and it will probably succeed. The company has persuaded the Spanish that J and B is the only up-market spirit, although I find it odd and ironic that an enormous amount of effort goes into the subtle blend of the whisky, and a great deal of effort goes into its marketing for it to be diluted with Coca-Cola. However, if they are buying 24 million bottles, I do not care what they dilute it with.

These are serious issues, and I wholly accept that the Minister has every right to tell his story in the way he does. I agree with the hon. Member for Middlesbrough that the Minister is an energetic Minister for Trade, and that he has done a great deal to support the export drive. I am more than happy to give the right hon. Gentleman credit for that, and—whether it is this side of an election or the other side—he will be a hard act to follow.

I hope, however, that the Minister will accept that success in those areas—welcome though it is—does not constitute a total package for the long-term success of the British economy. The Government should eschew the dangers of selectively picking genuinely good news and

*[Mr. Bruce]*

turning to turn it into the production of an economic miracle. People will not buy that this time, because they want confidence and the removal of insecurity.

6.43 pm

**Mr. Michael Fabricant** (Mid-Staffordshire): I begin on a rare moment of unanimity with the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce), who praised the Minister for Trade. My right hon. Friend, with his usual flair and dynamism, created a tour de force as he opened the debate this evening. Not only does he travel 33,000 miles high—

**Mr. Needham:** No, 33,000 ft high.

**Mr. Fabricant:** My right hon. Friend is not a member of the 33,000 ft high club, I am sure. He has promoted trade in some 40 countries worldwide.

**Mr. Ian Taylor:** It would be of great benefit to my hon. Friend to realise that, while my right hon. Friend is the Minister for Trade, I am the Minister with responsibility for space. There is a difference in the ways in which my right hon. Friend and I fly around the world.

**Mr. Fabricant:** I look forward to seeing my hon. Friend the Minister on the space shuttle shortly.

When I first came to the House three years ago, the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) told me that it was easy to get labelled in this place. I fear that I have become labelled as the media man—spelled "meejah". My right hon. Friend the Minister for Trade pointed out the credentials of some Opposition Members and I am pleased to put on record my background, which is not so much in the media as in selling the media, and particularly in broadcast engineering.

Before I came to the House, I helped to set up a company that designed, installed and manufactured equipment for radio stations in the European Union, the far east, east Africa, southern Africa south America, north America and the Soviet Union. My small contribution to the debate is at least based on some practical experience.

There was an interesting league table published in *The Times* on Friday 28 April of Secretaries of State for Trade and Industry or Presidents of the Board of Trade who have served in the DTI. It was interesting to note that the present Secretary of State has served there for the longest time. That continuity has given the Department of Trade and Industry its strength. The accompanying article in *The Times* was on the subject of exports, to which I shall confine my remarks today. It referred to the "years of complaining" about why the DTI could not be more like other countries' Industry Ministries, and especially Japan's MITI. I remember talking to Ministers long before I became a Member, and saying if only we could have a Department like Japan's MITI. I encountered firms such as NEC in Uganda, Kenya and Indonesia, and time and time again I found that the Japanese were far more interventionist than we were at the time. The article continued by saying that

"business now rates the DTI's export promotion activities. Mr. Heseltine's assigning of individual officials to specific countries and sectors and making them available to UK industry is judged to have worked well."

I can certainly endorse that from my own experience.

It is important for us not to belittle intervention. Although I am a great believer in the free market, one can only operate in the free market when all other countries are operating in the same environment. Some people advocated unilateral nuclear disarmament in the 1980s—we heard some more of that today from Opposition Members—but that was nonsense. It was foolish to suggest it then, as it is now, when other countries still had nuclear weapons.

It is equally foolish to say that we will not intervene to help our industry when our competitors are helping their industries. The Department of Trade and Industry is actively helping our industry. One of the points which I used to make to Industry Ministers before I was a Member of Parliament arose from my experience in the United States. Some Members may know that I studied for my doctorate at the university of Southern California. When I lived there, the governor was one of the most right-wing governors of all time.

**Mr. Simon Burns** (Chelmsford): Ronnie!

**Mr. Fabricant:** Ronnie Reagan, as the Whip points out. He later became President of the United States.

**Mr. Ian Taylor:** Oh, that Ronnie Reagan.

**Mr. Fabricant:** As opposed to any other. He was an interventionist, and rightly so because the republic of California—as the state of California is properly known—has one of the largest economies in the world. It certainly has the largest economy of any of the states in the United States. No one could say that Ronnie Reagan was anything less than to the right of the Republican party.

One of the laws which existed in the United States at that time—and still exists today—was chapter 11. Too many businesses in this country have gone under in the past because they have not had a chance to trade their way out of difficulty. I was pleased that in his Budget speech on 28 October 1994, the Chancellor said:

"To give management more time to reorder their affairs, we will introduce a 28-day moratorium binding upon all parties. This will give companies a breathing space to assess rescue prospects and come to an arrangement with creditors.

We are also consulting further on a mechanism to help substitute equity for debt of firms in administration or receivership. I hope that those measures will contribute further to the creation of a rescue culture, discouraging the needless and wasteful liquidation of businesses that could become sound."—[*Official Report*, 29 November 1994; Vol. 250, c. 1100.]

On too many occasions, I have heard from businesses in my constituency and elsewhere that banks and, dare I say it, sometimes even the Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise, have acted too soon in winding up companies that could otherwise trade out of difficulty. I hope that the 28-day moratorium will be extended to 28 weeks in due course, but it is a good start.

Could the decision to impose a moratorium be based partly on the experiences of Leyland DAF? Going back a little further, on 2 February 1993, the President of the Board of Trade told the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), in answer to a private notice question:

"The Government stand ready to work closely with Leyland DAF, the receivers,"—

it had just gone into receivership—

"banks and other interested parties to mitigate, as far as possible, the impact on United Kingdom jobs. We hope that it will prove possible for all those involved to find a means of creating a business

with a long-term, commercial future out of at least part of DAF's United Kingdom operations."—[*Official Report*, 2 February 1993; Vol. 218, c. 143.]

We now know that he was successful and Leyland DAF continues to trade. That is a first-rate example of how a United Kingdom version of chapter 11 can operate successfully.

Benjamin Franklin, who is a particular hero of mine, said:

"No nation was ever ruined by trade."

My hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) mentioned the difference between a common and a single currency. I feel uneasy about entering into a single currency, not only for the reasons that other hon. Members have mentioned but because our reserves would be required to form part of the general European monetary reserve. That would restrict our possibilities 10, 20, 30 or 40 years hence.

Although I do not believe for one moment that the United Kingdom can operate in isolation—we need partners—in 50, 60 or 70 years, after we are all dead and gone, Britain may wish to have some different partners from those in the European Union.

Interestingly, for the first time in its 220-year history, the United States has recognised that it cannot operate in isolation and that it must make trading arrangements with other countries. It is unhappy about its arrangements with Mexico and I believe that Australia feels equally unhappy about its arrangements with Japan, Vietnam and Korea. These are early days for the North American Free Trade Area, and one wonders whether in years to come there might be a realignment of trading arrangements.

If the Prime Minister's aim is successful—I hope that it is—and the general agreement on tariffs and trade reaches a complete conclusion, all those separate arrangements will become unnecessary. With total GATT, as I like to call it—well beyond the Uruguay round—we will not need any trading blocs as the bloc will be the world, and what could be better than that?

**Dr. Godman:** All the Australian political parties—both at federal and at state level—are anxious to strengthen trade ties with other south-east Asian nations.

**Mr. Fabricant:** The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. The Australian Government are right to strengthen those ties, just as we are right to try to strengthen our trading ties within the European Union.

I welcome certain aspects of the Maastricht treaty, such as the creation of the single market compliance unit, which endeavours to ensure, for example, that, just as we do not subsidise our airlines, the French Government do not subsidise Air France.

We should never close the door on opportunities, however. In 30, 40, 50 or 100 years' time, who knows what alignments there may be? A single currency would prevent us from ever considering other alignments if it meant, as I think it would, that we had to give up our foreign exchange reserves. That is why I welcome the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood on a common currency, which the Prime Minister suggested and which would be a much more flexible operation. I suspect that, in any event, the common currency would be the deutschmark.

In the past 12 to 14 years, things have moved on. The hon. Member for Middlesbrough rightly criticised the Government because, as an Opposition spokesman, his duty is to oppose. I am old enough to remember the 1970s, Madam Speaker, although I am sure that you will say that that is impossible, and expressions such as the "brain drain"—arising from high taxation when some of our most talented people went to the United States and did not return—are no longer in parlance. I went for two years to study in California, but I came back, despite the fact that taxation was extraordinarily high in Britain, with a top rate of 98p in the pound. The point is that the climate in the United Kingdom has been transformed and I would not like to see such high taxes again.

The hon. Member for Middlesbrough mentioned Aneurin Bevan—

**Mr. Bell:** Ernest Bevin.

**Mr. Fabricant:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for correcting me.

**Mr. George Foulkes** (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): There is a difference.

**Mr. Fabricant:** Absolutely, and a different spelling too. Ernest Bevin introduced the trade union system to Germany and, as I said in an earlier intervention, it was based on a different system to that existing in the United Kingdom. Many trade unions were competing for the same jobs within the same industry—competition that resulted in demarcation which cost us so many other jobs.

Last year, only 278,000 days were lost through strikes in the United Kingdom. Frankly, it does no harm to remind the House that, in 1979, 29 million days were lost through strikes. Clearly, our industrial relations system has transformed the environment. That is one reason why countries are choosing to invest here rather than in other EC countries; the social chapter is another.

To a large degree, trade unions pay the Labour party for its operations. He who pays the piper plays the tune and I wonder what will happen to trade union legislation in the unlikely event that a Labour Government were ever elected.

**Mr. Roy Beggs** (Antrim, East): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that one reason—in addition to the peace dividend—why Northern Ireland is so successful in attracting inward investment is that we have been able to show that we have the least number of days lost through strike action of any region of the United Kingdom?

**Mr. Fabricant:** It was my great pleasure to work for a short while in the early 1970s for the BBC in Northern Ireland and I am well aware that 98 per cent. of the population there want to work and, more importantly, want peace. I found it upsetting when I visited a factory in Newtownards that had been blown up by the IRA. People were deeply moved because the English company that had invested in Newtownards was doubtful whether it would rebuild the factory. I am pleased to say that, in the event, it did.

May I make the following recommendations to my hon. Friends on the Government Front Bench? First, the 28-day moratorium should be extended in due course and a chapter 11 version should exist within United Kingdom legislation so that more companies are allowed to trade out of difficulties.

*[Mr. Fabricant]*

Secondly, from my experience of operating in developing countries, I believe that the British Council should fund more grants for educational study in the United Kingdom. It is a false economy to deprive some foreign people of the opportunity of studying in the United Kingdom because people who have been educated in the UK often decide to invest here or specify British capital projects at a later date when they are in a position of responsibility.

Thirdly, my right hon. Friend the Minister for Trade will be aware that we need greater diplomatic representation in some areas, particularly the former member states of the Soviet Union. That would help our international trade, although I note that British Petroleum and other companies have been singularly successful in republics such as Azerbaijan, so we are already well away down that road.

**Mr. Garnier** *rose—*

**Mr. Fabricant:** I give way to my hon. Friend.

**Mr. Garnier:** I was simply interested in listening to the end of my hon. Friend's speech.

**Mr. Fabricant:** I thought that my hon. Friend wished to intervene. If he is anxious to speak, I shall give way to him as a politeness to the House.

**Madam Speaker:** Order. Hon. Members are anxious to speak, which is why they are sitting on the edge of the Benches, ready to take over as soon as the hon. Gentleman has finished.

**Mr. Fabricant:** In that case, Madam Speaker, I take your advice and finish my speech.

7.1 pm

**Mr. Ken Purchase** (Wolverhampton, North-East): My speech will seem terribly dull, following that of a world traveller, confidante of Benjamin Franklin, best friend of Ronnie Reagan and misquoter of Aneurin Bevan—or was it Ernest Bevin? I cannot possibly follow that kind of contribution.

When hon. Members read the title of the debate, "Exports, industry and inward investment", I ask them to take on board my subtitle of "Work, wealth creation and well-being". It is an alliteration, but an important one in the context of what we have to say.

Everyone has been spraying around statistics of one kind or another. We shall not agree on the majority of them and will have different versions from the same papers, or different figures that have no meaning or relationship. I wish to put into the debate one or two statistics that I have gleaned. I hope that they are not seen as untruths, for they are certainly not. They have all been taken from papers that are freely available to hon. Members. In 1993, there was £9 billion of inward investment into this country. That was excellent. Unfortunately, that sum is dwarfed by more than £18 billion of outward investment. The issue, therefore, is not necessarily how far the Government have encouraged inward investment but how we can tackle the investment gap and reverse the position that we have been in for so many years.

**Mr. Garnier:** The hon. Gentleman said that there had been £18 billion of outward investment. Does he say that that is dead money that is lost to the economy? Money invested abroad produces profits that can be and are brought back to this country to be reinvested in British jobs and the British economy.

**Mr. Purchase:** The hon. Gentleman makes a good point and I shall deal with it in due course as I develop my theme.

I preface my remarks by saying that the current inward investment does not compensate for the financial structures that have led Britain to have a far lower level of investment than our competitors. Just to reach the levels of our German and Japanese economic rivals, we would have to increase our investment by £42 billion per annum.

Earlier, I asked the Minister to give the disaggregated figures for the total inward investment between fixed investment—purchasing goods for production, buildings and so on—and what is, in the first instance, the simple acquisition of shares in companies or parts of companies in this country. My figure is a little out of date: in 1992, 70 per cent. of the inward investment, which has formed the basis of the Government's vindication of their policies, was in the form of acquisitions of existing companies. We may argue about the details of what that means and how it might further develop activity within the British economy but, starkly put and understood for what it is worth—statistics do not always guide us correctly—that is an important point. For instance, BMW's acquisition of Rover was purely an acquisition and so far has led no further. As a west midlands member, I hope that it will lead to considerable development in the Rover company.

**Mr. Needham:** It is already.

**Mr. Purchase:** Well, we shall see. It must come to fruition and time must be given for that. At first, it was thought that BMW simply wanted to acquire more outlets, and it was certainly envious of Rover's four-wheel drive vehicle. We shall have to see how all that develops.

On inward investment and the social chapter, the Japanese External Trade Organisation said about investment in Britain that membership of the European Union is a greater encouragement to inward investment than low wages, and hear, hear to that. It must be so. I take no comfort in seeing Japanese industry in this country overtaking ours, but the majority of Japanese companies pay considerably above what any of us would regard as an acceptable minimum wage and the conditions and quality of employment are often extremely high. It gives a lie to the idea that this country can prosper only with a low-wage economy.

Wynne Godley has written for *The Guardian*, which might disqualify him in the Minister's eyes. The Government chose him as one of the six wise men—*[Interruption.]* Yes, the Minister avoided him. Godley said that investment in the UK as a proportion of GDP had fallen to an all-time low.

I shall mention machine tools because we have discussed capacity. I give three cheers—or even four—to the news that exports are growing, and there are now signs that we cannot produce the volume of goods necessary to meet that export demand. That is almost entirely due to the wipeout of British manufacturing, especially the

machine tool industry in the west midlands, during the Thatcher years when the need for a thriving, dynamic manufacturing sector was dismissed out of hand. The west midlands felt that like a gale. A third of manufacturing capacity there was lost, along with an even greater fraction of jobs in those industries. As a result, there was a severe loss of our ability to produce the tools to produce goods for export.

I mentioned my subtitle of "Work, wealth creation and well-being". With regard to work, I am talking essentially of employment. Whatever the statistics are, to the eyes of those who want to see, it is evident that unemployment is endemic in many of our inner cities. The figures that I have seen suggest that of the male population of working age, some 30 per cent. are either unemployed, in some way incapacitated, off sick or permanently disabled. In my constituency, at least two of the wards have young male unemployment well in excess of 30 per cent. The chance of young Afro-Caribbeans getting jobs on a basis comparable to that of young white males is slim.

The Government have created a culture in which the idea of personal welfare comes through a girocheque falling on the mat through the front door. Young people seem to have missed entirely the period in their lives when they begin to understand the link between work, wealth creation and well-being. They have now reached the point where they go down to the post office with a little piece of paper which pays a certain amount of money and which, sadly, in many cases, is then supplemented by means which are outside the law.

**Mr. Needham:** Having been in Northern Ireland for seven years, where the figures are even more horrific, I understand the hon. Gentleman's point. That is exactly my point about the national minimum wage. It is exactly those sorts of people whom a national minimum wage would exclude and preclude from obtaining work. The hon. Gentleman wants to help them. Better to help them through the tax system than to do it that way.

**Mr. Purchase:** Yes, but the Minister misses the point. People in work can certainly be helped through the tax system, but these people are not in work. Many of them, aged 25, 26 and 27, have never had what we would call a proper job. They do not have that experience. They have not been allowed to grow and mature so that they can then make a contribution to the British economy. They do not understand the link that has to be forged between work, wealth creation and well-being. They simply have no concept of it. Because of the way in which the Government have dismissed value-added production, young people have been dispossessed of their dignity and virtually of their citizenship. That is the tragedy of the years of Thatcherism.

There is an anomaly in what Conservative Members say about social security and the minimum wage. It is perfectly coherent to argue that, because the quality of employment in some aspects in some places at some times is so poor, so hard pressed, in such a competitive market, for such low quality, low added-value goods that a proper wage cannot be paid, support is required through the social security system, but we cannot at the same time then say that the social security bill is too high. We can subsidise employers and look happy about it, but we cannot then grumble about the level of social security payments.

I mentioned the level of unemployment in my constituency, and in the nation as a whole male unemployment is exceptionally high, but we must also consider the quality of work available these days. Often, it is part time. There is nothing wrong with that, provided that one can get two or three part-time jobs and pay sufficient on the stamp to enable one to obtain the benefits to which one is entitled when genuinely unemployed. Often, that part-time employment carries with it no social value whatever in terms of a contribution from the employee or the employer.

**Lady Olga Maitland:** Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the great number of people who take part-time jobs then find that they lead to full-time work?

**Mr. Purchase:** If the hon. Lady has the evidence for that, I shall be pleased to see it. I have not seen concrete evidence for that statement, although I have heard it made before. Often, part-time work simply leads to more part-time work. The part-time training courses on offer often lead nowhere at all, let alone to full-time work.

**Lady Olga Maitland:** The hon. Gentleman somewhat misunderstands the purpose of part-time work. For many women in particular it is a great relief to be able to find part-time work because it fits in with their family commitments.

**Mr. Purchase:** I do not misunderstand the nature of part-time work for women. The council estate on which I was born was surrounded by a number of factories, among which were Ever Ready, Guy Motors, Henry Meadows, ABC Coupler, Jaguar—all, especially Ever Ready, provided part-time work on the twilight shift. Such work often supplemented the wages of unskilled workers from my council estate in a working class area. I cannot possibly undervalue that work. It was vital to the household income. It paid for the holiday and ensured that there were clothes on the kids' backs and food on the table. Generally speaking, the children of such families developed into good citizens when they grew up.

The part-time work that women are now doing is often the only income for the family. That is the result of a massive loss of employment opportunities. Such jobs cannot possibly be fully replaced by part-time work. We need full-time work with proper wages and conditions so that families can grow and prosper in a way that all hon. Members would wish, particularly the hon. Lady. I know of the hon. Lady's concern for family values. I read of them, I understand them, I believe that the hon. Lady is right and I, too, want them to be developed; but that has to be done on the basis of economic security. Families must feel secure in their employment.

People have been encouraged by the Government—I do not deny it—to buy their own homes, putting them on the first rung of the ladder. I am pleased if people own their own homes, much more pleased than if a landlord owns them any day of the week. However, when such people then find that their jobs are insecure and they cannot see their way through the next few weeks before another part-time job comes up, tension and worry are created within the family, which again prevents them from developing in the way that we would like.

The country does not just need the social chapter, it is crying out for it and that is particularly justified by the economic well-being of the British people and the way in

*[Mr. Purchase]*

which we would all want people to have a properly developed family life. The social chapter is vital to the future of Britain because it underpins the value of work.

The Conservatives argue for low wages while paying the family income supplement. However, they do not want a big social security bill. We say that it is right and proper that people should have the dignity of a wage for which they work so that on a Friday night they come home with enough money to see them through the week. That is the proper way in which to run our affairs; it is not rewarding people through social security with a giro dropping on the doormat as the only contact with economic life.

**Mr. Fabricant:** Is the hon. Gentleman a member of the Labour party school of thought that says that Governments can create jobs? I think hon. Members on both sides of the Chamber would agree with his sentiments, but he has not said how that can be done.

**Mr. Purchase:** A difference exists between the Labour party and the Conservative party, or at least the Thatcher Conservative party—as an election draws near, I am not sure what the new Conservative party is doing. You are becoming interventionist—*[Interruption.]* I get this wrong every time. The Conservative party is becoming interventionist, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It understands the value of Government playing a part in the development of the economy.

The Government create jobs in two ways. First, where it is necessary, they create employment programmes involving useful work, which is paid for by the taxpayer, and from which the taxpayer receives a return, in so far as people are employed, start to buy goods in shops, pay VAT and other taxes and, generally, make a contribution that offsets the total cost to the state of employing them in that way. More important, by intervening in a measured and proper way in the marketplace, the state creates the environment in which companies can prosper and jobs can be delivered. That is my strongly held view. It seems to be part of the philosophy of the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant). I encourage him to continue on that line of thought, as it will inevitably produce jobs that the country needs, for all the people who want them.

To help create wealth, one must have a job, and I hope that I have set out a programme for that. Ultimately, however, wealth creation is a means of achieving the well-being and welfare that we all need in one form or another. Profitable manufacturing companies are returning to the west midlands region and north-west. Indeed, many manufacturing companies are doing much better than they were five or six years ago. At last, some value is being placed on the ability of manufacturers to contribute massively to the economy.

We find, however, that companies are unable to retain their profits for further investment. Frankly, the reason is that shareholders are greedy. They were determined to take more than they should from the company. Consequently, managers are under great pressure to ensure that a dividend is achieved that meets market requirements and demand, because otherwise they face the axe. Managers, whom we value highly, make profits, but instead of being able to use the biggest fraction of profits and retained earnings for further investment, development and job creation, companies are robbed of their inheritance as shareholders demand bigger and bigger pay-outs from their holdings. That must change.

In this country, investment is the epitome of short-termism. It simply means that retained earnings—the best means by which to invest—are progressively taken out of the hands of managers and put into the pockets of financiers. It is not good for Britain or British manufacturing industry. We must get to grips with that problem.

I mention almost in passing that pension funds are revalued on a far more regular basis than is necessary. Often, their fund managers give a monthly or quarterly figure on returns. A sensibly managed pension fund is one that provides long-term returns that equal the pay-outs required by pensioners. That is the way to run pension funds. They have become nothing more than a means of share-dealing, with chopping and changing. It would be reasonable to reconsider stamp duty or a tax on investment churning, which I talked about earlier.

We all know that it does not help British industry if it is in the grip of—in thrall to, as it were—people who have no more interest in manufacturing industry than they can fly in the air. Their interest is in making a fat profit as quickly as they can, whether or not it exists in reality, and turning it over to their shareholders. It must stop.

The country would improve its economic performance by adopting some of the methods that have been employed for many years in Germany, France and our other competitor countries. Their companies have long-term aims and capital holdings. In that way, they are able to plan their production.

It is often said that business people want a settled environment. I am sure that that is true. Planning is always better and of a higher quality when some sureness exists about what is likely to happen next month, next year and the year after. In this country, the way in which the capital markets are played with creates the greatest instability that they face. Measures must be taken to deal with that problem.

When wealth is created, not only do we suffer from a lack of retained profits to invest in the business, but we find that the company's wealth is distributed unequally. The work of scientific-technical people in particular is of great value, as is the intellectual capital that they bring to bear on these processes. We should consider how they are rewarded compared with, for example, lawyers, accountants and owners of capital. There is no comparison.

We have a culture that believes that, somehow or other, the intellectual capital and the skills employed by workers are of less value and importance than that of the wheelers and dealers on the exchanges and futures market, and the people who are into derivatives of all sorts. We seem to think that it is more important to reward them than the people who create the work that we all so badly need. That belief has been a feature of British industrial and commercial life for as long as anyone can remember. It grew to almost its worst during the 1980s.

I hope that we will start to get that matter under control. We must encourage the best people and brains to enter engineering, manufacturing and science-based industries. We must reward them. Some people say that Cedric Brown is worth £500,000, but I know of some scientists and engineers who dwarf his contribution and who

struggle along with nothing like such a salary. Many do not earn £20,000. We do not want to create that sort of society. It must be recognised that the main contributors to that wealth should be the main beneficiaries. To get us back on the track to prosperity, we must create that culture.

The purpose of work and wealth creation is to improve our well-being, but what have the past 15 years brought us? It is sad to consider that question. If we have created the wealth, we should have a thriving, healthy, prosperous and well-educated population. What is the truth of the matter? Everywhere, poor people are more ill than those with greater incomes. That is wrong. I take a moral stance about it. In a civilised, well-developed country, everyone is entitled to the best available health care and to the best health. There is no reason why people in a country such as ours should die from curable diseases. We find massive inequality there.

After 16 years of Conservative rule, we hear of teachers being chucked out of the teaching force. We cannot afford not to educate our young people. The Conservatives want to have a great argument about where the money is in education. It is true that some education authorities have not properly played the game, but, by and large, the money under the formula has gone to schools. That is the truth. There is simply not enough money. We must spend more on education. We cannot afford to skimp in that sector. There has been a housing slump of the most serious proportions.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse):** Order. With my usual tolerance, I was hoping that the hon. Gentleman would get back to the subject of the debate, but he is going very wide of it.

**Mr. Purchase:** I always accept your decisions, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but without good health it is difficult to hold down a good job, and without being properly educated one almost certainly will not get a job at all. Unless people have a roof over their heads, their health will deteriorate and they will not be able to go to work anyway.

We now have the worst housing crisis that people can remember. In my constituency, waiting lists for council houses are the longest for 25 years. I treat all those matters as relevant to what we ought to be able to see, feel and touch as a result of the wealth-creating activities of our companies. Nevertheless I shall move on, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because clearly you are not comfortable when I raise such subjects. Personally, I consider that they are of the utmost importance.

What is the prescription for exports? I shall join in the praise of the Minister for Trade. Everywhere I go, industrialists and factory owners say, "He is a good chap, that Needham. He is energetic and he knows what it is all about. He is having a go, and it is a good performance." I simply qualify that praise by saying that the Minister did not have much of an act to follow. By the way, we shall not keep him on after the general election; we shall have someone else. However, there is no doubt that we can see the difference between a Government who are committed to our industrial export effort and a Government who are not—and the Minister is a wonderful improvement on what we saw before.

However, let us examine the real position. We have had to run to stay still. World trade has expanded by more than 8 per cent., yet the expansion in British exports has also been just above 8 per cent.; we have merely managed to hold our own. More effort is required. The French, for instance, are bringing people from all over the world to their country to see what they have to offer. Perhaps we should think about copying that.

We must keep the role of the Export Credits Guarantee Department under review. In many cases it does a good job, but we must be prepared to take more risks in countries where trade is beginning to open up. The Minister may know that I have recently returned from Latin America, where we did a little arithmetic on the ECGD and found that it was less adventurous than may be called for at this stage.

**Mr. Fabricant:** Does the hon. Gentleman concede that the ECGD is now more competitive than, or at least as competitive as, the German system, HERMES?

**Mr. Purchase:** The ECGD is very patchy; it is a curate's egg. There are indeed some areas of the world where the risk seems small and where there is a little hot spot where it does very well. However, I shall not praise the ECGD in that respect because the word coming back to me from people who use it is that it is patchy. I do not concede the point made by the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire.

I commend to the House the development of the small firms sector. Several steps need taking, and I join the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire in calling for a section 11-type moratorium law. I want the Government to be quicker about settling their debts and to give better encouragement for the recovery of debt. Indeed, I should like prompt payment to become part of our culture.

The story that the Minister for Trade has had to tell is a good one, but only by comparison with what happened before. Thatcherism has hurt Britain badly and it will take years to recover our industrial strength. The social furniture is in disrepair and, unfortunately, we have a giro culture. The prescription is: let us work harder and give more encouragement and incentives to our industries. Above all, we must get money into manufacturing industry.

7.33 pm

**Mr. Edward Garnier** (Harborough): The last time that I crossed swords, if that is the right expression, with the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mr. Purchase) we were debating fox hunting. I did not learn much from him then, but I have learnt a lot more from him today, because he has spoken with personal knowledge of his constituency and his west midlands region.

I was interested to hear that the hon. Gentleman had recently been to south America. I hope that he enjoyed himself, and that he learnt on that visit that Brazil is now our biggest export market in the region. We have record exports to that country; they exceeded £0.5 billion for the first time last year. In the first two months of this year, we have already exported £105.2 million worth of goods to Brazil, and increasing Brazilian exports to the United Kingdom created two-way trade worth £1.5 billion in 1994. There are huge opportunities in Latin America, and I trust that the hon. Gentleman played his part in boosting British exports to the region when he was there.

*[Mr. Edward Garnier]*

Like the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East, the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) was most generous to my right hon. Friend the Minister for Trade, commending him for all his hard work and for the worldwide travel in which he engages on behalf of our country. I was going to join in that praise, but the point of what I intended to say was somewhat punctured when my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant) said that he had been there first, been there earlier and been there twice before. None the less, there is no question about the fact that my right hon. Friend is accepted in all corners of the House, and both abroad and in the United Kingdom, as a hard-working Minister. I am delighted to place on record the fact that he is doing such a excellent job.

The hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) seemed for a moment to be suffering from what I might call analysis paralysis. He looked down the kaleidoscope and saw all sorts of interesting segments and colours, but he was not quite sure what the pattern was. He was asked one or two questions so that hon. Members could find out whether there was a thread to his argument, but if there was he did not seem to have hold of it. However, perhaps his hon. Friends will assist him during the debate so that if he catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and replies for the Opposition we shall learn more about the Labour party's economic policy and the work that it wishes to be done on exports, industry and inward investment. I look forward to hearing the hon. Gentleman.

The message from the Opposition is deeply depressing, not only because it is wrong but because they think that it is in the interests of the British people that they should give out that message. The truth is that British businesses are winning in the global market. I use that expression advisedly, because—to add my name to those of the many other Thomas Cook beneficiaries who have spoken—I too have been around the world a bit over the past year or so, and in Korea last October I attended a conference arranged by the Institute of Global Economics. In Korea and in the far east generally, the expression "the global market" is on everybody's lips, and it is right that we should consider our performance as exporters and as attractors of inward investment in the global context.

As I said, the United Kingdom is winning. Output has been rising for three years and is now at record levels—up nearly 10 per cent. since the beginning of 1992. Last year it grew faster in the United Kingdom than in Japan and in the rest of the European Union. In the first quarter of this year output rose by nearly 1 per cent. and was 4 per cent. higher than the figure for a year ago.

I speak as the representative of a constituency that is, among other things, a manufacturing area, and manufacturers are leading the recovery. Not only is output up by more than 4 per cent., but productivity has increased and investment was up by 8 per cent. in the last quarter alone. Jobs are being created at the fastest rate for 17 years. The result has been success in world markets. Underlying exports have increased by more than 12 per cent.

Last year the current account was broadly balanced, showing a £2 billion surplus in the second half of the year. The latest figures show that non-EC exports for March stood at a record £3.5 billion, leading to a better than expected improvement in our visible deficit. According to the Confederation of British Industry that export boom is not a flash in the pan but is set to continue. Export orders are growing at their fastest rate ever, and optimism is at its most buoyant since 1973.

I can confirm those facts from my own constituency, where textile companies and light engineers report that their order books, and even their long-term order books, are filling up. They are taking on new people to work.

The figures produced by Leicestershire county council in its unemployment bulletin for March 1995 show that the unemployment in my constituency—which is not only a rural idyll but stretches up to the borders of the city of Leicester and is partly industrialised—has fallen by 633 since May 1992. It has fallen by 33 in the past month and, as I recall, by more than 25 per cent.—I think the figure is 28 per cent.—in the past decade. Those figures are from the east midlands, an industrial area which is fairly similar to the constituency of the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East.

The area has been written off by the Labour party spin doctors and the Opposition doom merchants, but work is continuing. Business men are investing abroad thanks to the work of my right hon. Friend the Minister for Trade. They are not prepared to be waylaid by the appalling and desperately depressing stories that the Opposition would have us believe. Business men are working, investing and making the country a success. They are proud of doing so and want to take people out of the unemployment figures and back into the workplace, which is precisely what they are doing.

I shall not bore hon. Members with statistics from various accountants. I know that the hon. Member for Middlesbrough is already bored with the document that he is reading and desperately trying to understand. Every trend that one cares to look at is improving, week in, week out, in the east midlands—and in my county in particular. The people who work in that region are not prepared to be sidelined by the doom-laden stories that we hear from the Opposition.

There are two ways to approach the success that I have described. First, we can reflect on the achievement. The world of 1979 would be unimaginable in Britain today. Taxes were too high on individuals and companies. Large sections of the economy were run by inefficient, overmanned, state-owned monopolies. The trade unions had more say in running companies than management. Despite the kind words that were heard at whatever conference it was last week, the public can be in no doubt that, in the hideous event of a Labour party victory after the next general election, the unions would be back in Downing street, demanding beer and sandwiches, saying what was going on and saying that they were in charge.

It is all very well for the hon. Member for Rotherham (Mr. MacShane), who spent 15 years or so in the happy environment of Geneva, and who has returned, possibly out of touch with this country, perhaps he cannot even remember the last Labour Government, but I can. Although I may look a lot older than my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire, I remember only too well the appalling state of this country in 1979—all as a result of the Labour party and the trade union barons who fund it.

When the Government first took office, major structural reform was needed. We knew that then and everyone, even, apparently, new Labour—at least, for public

consumption—has now come round to our view. For 15 years we have worked to free up the market so that entrepreneurs—business men and women in my constituency, in my region and that of the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East, as well as those in Scotland and the north-east—can succeed.

We have cut taxes and restored incentives for personal endeavour. We have slashed the cripplingly high top marginal rate from 98 per cent. to 40 per cent. and the main rate of corporation tax by one third. We have privatised the state-owned industries. In 1979, the nationalised industries cost the taxpayer £50 million a week—how many hospitals can be built for that? Privatised industries are now returning the same amount to the Exchequer every week in taxes on the profits that they make. We have reformed the labour market so that managers have the ability to manage. They are no longer defensive and no longer have to look over their shoulders to see what the bully boys in the trade unions are up to.

Manufacturing productivity has grown faster in the United Kingdom over the past decade than in any other G7 country. That is good news, which the public need and want to know, and which the Government have produced. In the previous two decades, the United Kingdom had been the slowest in manufacturing terms.

The Government have liberalised our markets, brought choice, lower prices and massive injections of investment—£30 billion in the telecommunications industry alone, following privatisation in 1984. The result has been a transformation in our industrial performance—a transformation that we are seeing today in every forecast and every analysis of the figures.

Who would have dreamt in 1979, with car production in this country on its knees, that the Japanese would be building cars here to export back to Japan? Since 1979, the number of cars produced here for export has risen by nearly 60 per cent. Who would have dreamt in 1979, when we were net importers of televisions, that we would reverse the flow of that trade and would be exporting more television sets than France and Germany? Who would have dreamt in 1979, when our labour relations record made us the laughing stock of Europe, that it would now be the envy of most of our competitors? In 1979 we lost 29 million working days to strikes; last year we did not lose 1 per cent. of that figure.

Of course, there have been setbacks. Many people have suffered personal hardship, as I am sure the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East will know. Many companies have faced difficulties and some sectors are still affected by the sometimes harsh consequences of the last recession. I know that from my own textilers, who are worried about the low wage economies in the far east, but all of them are prepared to fight for their country, to fight for their jobs and to fight for their companies. They are not prepared to give up heart. Why on earth should they? Everything is ready to improve further the economy not only of my east midlands region but that of the country as a whole.

In the next two years, the export-driven economic improvement will translate itself on to the domestic economy so that those who work in this country's industries but who do not export—those who are in the retail trade—will feel the benefits and realise that the recession is long over. I hope that when the hon. Member for Middlesbrough replies he will change his tune and start singing a happier song. There is so much good news out there—he only has to come out into the country to find it. It is there for the taking.

I know that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Energy, who I welcome to his duties, will give a good account, not only of himself but of the Government, who have been working so hard to assist this country's economy.

7.46 pm

**Mr. Denis MacShane** (Rotherham): It is always a pleasure to follow the hon. and learned Member for Harborough (Mr. Garnier), but he represented, in essence, the two-nation country in which we live. For him, everything was coming up roses and everything was as good as it could be in the best of all possible worlds. He made passing reference to the moving description by my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mr. Purchase). Were the hon. and learned Gentleman to come with me to my constituency he would find a different Britain. It is the tragedy of this Government that they have divided the nation down the middle. It is the Labour party's task to reunite it. Inward investment, exports and investments will play a crucial part in that task.

I pay tribute to the sun-tanned, air-miled right hon. Member, the Minister for Trade. I am sorry to say that I understand that his air miles do not belong to him, but are to flow into the pocket of the Revenue. No doubt they will flow out again to the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) or whoever—perhaps as another interesting set of papers to sell to the nation.

The Minister called for partnership, supported planning and described the rigour and extent of Government intervention. For a moment I thought that I was listening to the only socialist Minister in the Government. The very success that he has achieved, like the proposals made by the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant), are based on suggestions that have been made by the Labour party in Opposition. We want Government intervention. We want the Government to fight for industry. We want embassies to help to export for Britain. We are interested in the chapter 11 ideas. I passionately support an increase in education so that more foreigners know about Britain and, equally importantly, more British people can speak foreign languages and know how to sell in other countries.

**Mr. Fabricant:** Does the hon. Gentleman accept that intervention is effective only when one intervenes in successful industries to make them world beaters? Does he accept that when the National Economic Development Council existed and there was a Labour Government, the Labour Government intervened on lame duck industries at the greater expense of those industries that could have been successful?

**Mr. MacShane:** In an earlier intervention, the former Paymaster General, the right hon. Member for Northavon (Sir J. Cope), said that one quarter of all our manufacturing exports was represented by Airbus—a consortium led by the state-owned French Aerospatiale company, which is backed very much by Government intervention. He reproached the last but one Labour Government for not having put Britain's state money into a full share of the successful airbus project.

**Sir John Cope:** The hon. Gentleman is misrepresenting what I said. He is exaggerating the extent, impressive as it is, of the exports attributable to British Aerospace Airbus. He is distorting what I said about the Labour Government. The investment which has been made by the British Government over the years, particularly in the A320, has proved to be a good investment. It is a good example of backing success in the way that my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant) mentioned just now. Crucially, the Labour Government also nationalised British Aerospace. That in itself was extremely damaging for a long period. I am glad that we denationalised British Aerospace. Nationalisation is the sort of intervention that we should not have now.

**Mr. MacShane:** The right hon. Member for Northavon cannot have it both ways. Either he wants Government intervention and praises the lead role taken by the French nationalised aircraft company, Aerospatiale, or he does not. If he reads his speech in *Hansard*, he will see that he criticised the 1966-70 Labour Government for not intervening as much as he wanted them to. I am simply stressing the point that Government intervention is fundamental in industry.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, North-East pointed out that for every pound coming into this country in inward investment, £2 leaves the country. Yes, that can sometimes represent rents coming back into the United Kingdom, but at the same time it represents a huge loss of potential jobs. If that money were invested in the United Kingdom, it would create jobs. I was privileged to attend a dinner of unit trust and investment trust representatives last night. The key speaker made exactly the points that my hon. Friend made. They are looking to find ways of repatriating capital so that capital stays in this country.

If we examine the Government's claims that inward investment is the result of recent Government policies, we find that the biggest surge of inward investment from Japan was between 1987, when it was £856 million, and 1990, when it surged to £2.1 billion. That was the period when Britain was in the exchange rate mechanism and was strongly committed to Europe. By 1992, as the clouds gathered over our commitment to Europe and we left the ERM, there was a disinvestment by Japanese investors. Those figures come from the report produced by the Library last October. Overall, Japanese investment in the United Kingdom is less than £5 billion, compared with £5.5 billion from Germany, £8.5 billion from France and £16.5 billion from the Netherlands.

I noticed a lot of cheap cracks about Europe in the Minister's speech. The growing hostility that one can feel seething from the Conservative Benches to engagement in Europe should give those who argue for inward investment pause for thought. The largest bulk of inward investment into Britain comes from Europe. Asianisation—to use the term that the right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell), the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee, often uses in speeches today—may be a supplement, but our main future for both inward investment and exports lies in Europe.

To be part of that Europe, we have to look at our opt-out status. The President of the Board of Trade made a speech on the matter at the Institute of Directors last week. He said that the actual performance of so many British manufacturing companies in so many sectors was seriously lacking. He said:

"It is the averages that count and the UK has a long tail of under-achievers. You know it, I know it."

Why cannot the Government admit it tonight? As the President of the Board of Trade said, Britain's share of many of its top 80 international markets has been taken over, not by low-cost, Asian exporters, but by high-cost, well-paid European, North American and Japanese companies, which compete even with their higher labour or currency costs on higher quality products.

So, as the President of the Board of Trade said, the challenge is

"producing top-quality products that people want to buy".

That was not a speech from a Labour spokesman. It was a speech by the President of the Board of Trade. That message is reflected across the board by every serious examination of our competitive ability these days.

The Confederation of British Industry is concerned that we are reaching capacity constraints. According to the latest CBI survey, our capacity constraint in April this year was similar to that in October 1988, at the height of the Lawson boom. I saw that on a recent visit to Europe's best engineering steel plant, UES Steels in Rotherham. The company is having to take on extra shifts because it cannot produce enough to meet the demands of its customers. That is good news, except in that so little has been invested that steel is now being imported into the United Kingdom because we have insufficient capacity to produce.

The debate is partly about investment. The complaints about under-investment come from every sector. A report just produced by CCN Business Information says:

"There is still no sign that industry is prepared to invest in new plant and equipment. On the contrary, the evidence points to a greater priority on restoring dividends."

That point was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, North-East.

Richard Freeman, the chief economist at ICI, has said:

"I have no doubt that investment is lagging behind—people are hanging back because they feel uncertain."

In 1960 the gear industry in Britain was twice the size of the German gear industry and there was no real industrial gear production in Italy. Now the United Kingdom industry trails both Italy and Germany in the export market. Mr. Michael Opperman, one of the leaders of the gear industry and a Birmingham gear producer has said that shareholders need to take a long-term view, particularly when it comes to investment.

The investment crisis is a constant problem that faces everyone concerned about manufacturing. Total investment—again, according to the House of Commons Library research papers—is down by 11 per cent. since 1990. That is the Prime Minister's legacy. He has presided over disinvestment in Britain. Money for Cedric Brown, no money for investment. I feel that strongly, as I represent the constituency of Rotherham. The success that Conservative Members have talked about is not visible in my constituency.

We have heard talk about the minimum wage. That is for a separate debate. I have here a wage slip handed to me recently. It shows pay of £1.80 an hour and take-home pay of £99 for a 50-year-old man with a family. That is not a living wage. The top-up from the Department of

Social Security is a subsidy from the taxpayer to low-wage, exploitative employers. That is not acceptable. There is a fundamental dividing line between Conservative Members, who offer charity, and Opposition Members, who call for justice in the labour market.

**Mr. Peter Luff** (Worcester): And unemployment.

**Mr. MacShane:** The hon. Gentleman refers to unemployment. It is interesting that countries such as the United States, which have a clear minimum wage that has increased in recent years—indeed, Mr. Gingrich, the speaker of the Congress, voted for the last increase in the minimum wage in 1990—have a much better record of employment creation than the United Kingdom.

I deal now with exports, with particular reference to Rotherham. Despite the privatisation of British Steel, and despite the Government's claim that we have made a success of exports, the latest figures reveal that this country exports only 2.8 million tonnes of steel. Canada, Poland and even the former Czechoslovakia export more than us. One of the reasons is that we consume far less steel than other countries.

Per capita steel consumption in the United Kingdom is dramatically low. The figures that I am about to cite are kilograms per capita, the standard international measure for steel consumption. United Kingdom per capita consumption is 232 kg. That compares with 477 kg in Germany, 446 kg in Italy, 532 kg in Korea, 319 kg in Taiwan and 384 kg in America. I hope that the House will forgive me for detailing these tedious steel statistics but, converted into plain English, they show that other countries have public-private partnership programmes of investment, whether in new roads, hospitals, the car industry or shipbuilding, and we do not. Until we are ready to take the brakes off investment, our manufacturing capacity will suffer.

We need more than a Minister selling the United Kingdom overseas; we need a policy of demand based on continuing investment, especially outside the Conservative heartland of the M25 region. We need regional investment banks, and we need to encourage our schools to teach languages as opposed to cutting funding for schools.

The Labour party has learnt a great deal. From the disaster of the two-nation Britain it has learnt that new policies based on investment, increased exports and the revitalisation of all parts of our economy are needed. Only Labour can deliver the package to put such policies into effect.

8.1 pm

**Lady Olga Maitland** (Sutton and Cheam): I, too, congratulate my right hon. Friend the Minister for Trade on his excellent work in batting for Britain's interests overseas and attracting investment into this country. I am not a bit surprised at the success that he has achieved, because I saw how much he managed to do in changing the face of Belfast while he was a Minister at the Northern Ireland office. Any man who can turn Belfast around can certainly do a tremendous amount elsewhere.

Our track record on inward investment is a great success story. We should be proud that we have a magnetic appeal to overseas investors which is without parallel in Europe. Our trademark is a record of excellence. Many statistics have been mentioned this evening, but I shall state simply that the United Kingdom's stock of inward investment rose from £52 billion in 1986 to £131 billion in 1993.

That was no happy accident; we happened to have the right industrial and economic climate, which attracted thousands of companies from all over the world. The truth is that we worked hard and with great determination to build a nation on Conservative policies which are proven and which have created the right atmosphere for inward investment.

Overseas companies come here because the Government are committed to creating a commercial environment in which business can flourish and grow. We have the lowest strike record in Europe and the lowest main rates of corporation tax in the European Union, and, indeed, among the Group of Seven countries. Our personal tax rates are low, thereby allowing people to work hard and progress. We have low inflation and low rates, and no foreign exchange controls. Could the Opposition ever promise never to meddle and interfere with these valuable elements which guarantee our economic success?

Our labour costs are highly competitive, and we impose no punitive burdens, such as the social chapter. We are the envy of the Germans, who sent hundreds of companies here to escape such crippling sanctions. We need only look to Spain and France, where crippling social burdens have created very high unemployment, especially among the young. It is no wonder that Jacques Delors remarked that the social chapter opt-out makes Britain a "paradise" for foreign investment.

Last June, a Gallup survey revealed that eight out of 10 of Britain's top companies supported opting out of the social chapter. The same proportion believed that Labour's commitment to the social chapter would damage Britain's business.

In short, we work hard to welcome overseas investment. The core of our attitude is that we welcome overseas companies; we do not see them as foreign companies, but, once they happen to be here, as British companies with foreign owners. We are not suspicious of them, unlike the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mr. Purchase), who seems to have a deep mistrust of overseas companies, as if there was something wrong with their making a profit in this country.

**Mr. Purchase:** That is not true. I am simply proud of successful British companies and like to see them promoted more than foreign companies. I hope that the hon. Lady shares that sentiment.

**Lady Olga Maitland:** Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, when British companies benefit from foreign investment, we are all better off? His attitude to BMW's massive investment in Rover was a case in point. He fails to understand that such investment means jobs, which in turn mean livelihoods rather than the dole queue. He gives the impression of being a dog in the manger.

We must take great pride in our success with trade union relations. We are proud of the fact that we have a low strike record, thanks to our trade union reforms. None the less, below the surface those relations would be volatile and vulnerable if ever there were to be a Labour Government.

We should not forget the trade unions' hostility to foreign investment, which led the Trades Union Congress to describe Japanese firms as "alien" as recently as 1991.

*[Lady Olga Maitland]*

Nor should we forget that, in 1987, Ford's plans to build a new plant in Dundee fell through because the unions, including the Transport and General Workers Union, would not accept a single union deal.

**Mr. MacShane:** Mention has twice been made today to the TUC referring to foreign investment as "alien". It was, in fact, an expression used by Ken Gill, who did not speak for the TUC or for the mass of trade unions or trade unionists in this country. The expression was explicitly repudiated by leaders of the TUC at the time.

**Lady Olga Maitland:** I reject the hon. Gentleman's assertion.

Only the other day, Labour promised what I can only describe as a "strikers charter" of new union rights. The right hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) pledged to give striking workers a legal right to keep their jobs. He said that he wanted to bring Britain into line with Europe and stop bosses victimising staff.

The truth is that the Opposition are still in the pockets of their paymasters, and confidence in Labour's position on trade unions will come only when the party accepts that the Government's trade union reforms are working. It does not reassure companies looking to invest in this country when they hear the right hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) call compulsory ballots "scandalous".

There are some very positive benefits from inward investment, especially at the workplace. Inward investment has played an important part in the transformation of our manufacturing industry, and especially management. Workplace habits have also changed. It is sometimes alleged that foreign-owned plants are simply screwdriver operations; in other words, workers use assembly kits imported from Asia, which creates only a small number of low-paid jobs. That is not so.

Japanese companies such as car makers find it worth while to use a high British content in their products, especially as our domestic suppliers have turned out to be more reliable than expected. In any case, it is not viable for the companies to import parts from their own base countries.

Sony is a case in point. It is a Japanese electronics firm which is now Britain's largest maker of television sets. Its two plants in south Wales employ more than 3,000 people, and support about 9,000 suppliers' jobs nearby. The European content of the television sets made there is already 90 per cent., and may rise further.

A study of Japanese-owned plants by the Judge institute of management studies in Cambridge found that the European content of their products increased steadily as they became longer established, typically reaching about 80 per cent. after 20 years.

The Japanese links with local firms have helped those firms to improve the quality of their goods to match the Japanese high standards. Toyota may be tough with their car parts suppliers, but, as a result, the suppliers have re-engineered their production processes to improve quality and cut costs. As an incentive, Toyota gives its suppliers a regular feedback, awarding them marks for QCDD—quality, cost, delivery and development. That is a culture shock indeed.

One firm in Leicestershire, Rearsby Automotive, which makes handbrakes, gear sticks and so on—it may be in the constituency of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Harborough (Mr. Garnier)—has said that, as a result of its liaison with the Japanese,

"we were dragged kicking and screaming into becoming a worldclass firm."

I make no apology for telling the good news—the positive news. The benefits to our economy are incalculable. That point needs to be repeated many times, so that we can slay the myth that Britain is a sick and ailing country, a slur eagerly put round by the Opposition. They have the gall to run down this country, suggesting uncertainty, vulnerability and insecurity. They begrudge our success stories, and they begrudge the fact that we have brought scores of jobs to this country, through companies such as Black and Decker, which closed its Limburg plant in Germany and expanded in Spennymoor, in the constituency of the right hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), with 300 jobs on the way.

**Mr. Purchase:** We all appreciate the successes. Can the hon. Lady tell us, however, when manufacturing production and manufacturing exports will return to the levels that we enjoyed in 1984, when manufactured exports exceeded manufactured imports? With all the news that the hon. Lady brings to us this evening, can she tell the House when that favourable position will return?

**Lady Olga Maitland:** Bearing in mind the fact that our economy is booming and bringing benefits all round, the hon. Gentleman's remarks are simply irrelevant today.

I want to return to the remarks made by the managing director of Black and Decker:

"The production cost savings in switching to Britain are far bigger than our total wages bill for a whole year."

The company found that the compulsory social charges in mainland Europe of paying half of every worker's health insurance, unemployment insurance and state pension, and all the company pension, were crippling it. That is why the company came to this country. A Black and Decker machine shop supervisor said:

"Industry is flexible, it has to be—and the Social Chapter isn't."

I now turn to the social chapter, because there are many myths and misinterpretations of it. I did not find it helpful—it will not be helpful for the country as whole—to hear the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) say that Labour believed in the minimum wage, because it was social justice. That sounds splendid in itself, until one begins to examine what the hon. Gentleman means.

The call for a minimum wage will drive away all the jobs that we have created. The Opposition fail to understand that, if they introduce a minimum wage, they will increase wages for some, but the net result will be that the prices of products will increase, profits will go down and there will be an increase in the jobless. I hardly call that new Labour fairness. If we fail to heed the lessons of the social chapter, we shall find that Britain will rapidly lose its attractions, and major companies will relocate. They may go to eastern Europe or to the far east. One thing that is for certain is that they will not stay in this country.

Our strength is that we have a flexible work force who can adapt to the demands made of them and are prepared to retrain where necessary. They welcome the opportunity

to work overtime to bring benefits to themselves and their families. People respond to the chance to work, and to bring rewards for themselves.

If we had been stuck with the social chapter, people would have been limited to a maximum of 48 hours a week. Many of our workers are doing between 55 and 65 hours a week, week in and week out. That is their choice. The Government do not have a right to try to limit the hours that people choose to work. The reward is that people have a marked increase in disposable income, which has never been the case under any Labour Government. If we hobbled a company by preventing it from working hard, we would deprive factories of the ability to compete worldwide.

We must consolidate our work in sustaining the right climate for inward investment. We need to support companies that can genuinely show that they will introduce long-term, quality employment. We need to show inward investors that they enjoy the support of a Government who are committed to their success and their business.

However, we should not delude ourselves. International companies would not be willing to locate in the United Kingdom or to create thousands of skilled jobs if this country allowed itself to be held back by the anti-business attitudes so beloved of the Labour party—or, to put it in Labour party newspeak, interventionism, which means denying companies the right to manage.

We should remind ourselves of the statement by the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) when he was trade and industry spokesman. He told a Tribune group rally:

"more socialist planning would be the best way to solve Britain's economic problems."

He left the audience in no doubt about where he stood. He added:

"How many people have they heard making the case for socialist planning of the economy? If we can get almost a majority without even trying, just think what we can do if we are confident and really give it a push."

"It", of course, was socialist planning.

I conclude with a word of warning—

**Mr. Purchase:** It is time you concluded.

**Lady Olga Maitland:** I am giving you extra warning—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. I hope that the hon. Lady is not warning the Chair.

**Lady Olga Maitland:** I would not dream of trying to take your elevated position here, Mr. Deputy Speaker. What you say is highly respected.

I issue a word of warning. The Labour threats to interfere, which come from here, there and everywhere, could be extremely damaging. Foreign investors will not invest in an unsuccessful Britain. Labour's business plans for Britain demonstrate that Labour is still wedded to the policies that lay behind our industrial failure of the past.

Mr. Stanley Kalms, the chairman of the Dixons group, was clear about Labour's plan. In a letter he wrote to *The Times* on 11 February 1994, he said:

"I had an awful sense of having been there before. We went through all this in the 1960s and 1970s, and it didn't work. British business doesn't want a national plan. It wants low inflation, it wants low interest rates, it wants good industrial relations. But some great blueprint drawn up by civil servants, politicians and economists—no thank you."

The *Financial Times* commented on Labour's policies as follows:

"Labour's corporatist, interventionist instincts are alive and putting the boot into the free market. Those who thought Labour had forsaken the 'profits are dirty, bash big business' mentality of the post-war decade are in for a rude awakening."

The overseas companies are taking a careful look at what might happen if we had a Labour Government. They are well aware of the increasing burdens that could be thrust upon them. Indeed, they will take rapid flight should there ever be a Labour Government.

Overseas companies are aware that they would be threatened with heavy tax increases. They have already taken note of the comments by the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) about trying to close tax loopholes. Everybody knows that that phrase means increasing taxation, which is crippling and which will drive out all the magnificent inward investment we have brought to this country. I congratulate the Government on their enormous drive to attract inward investment. I have no doubt that this country will continue to support a Government who will keep jobs.

8.19 pm

**Dr. Norman A. Godman** (Greenock and Port Glasgow): The hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) has just offered us a remarkable picture of a United Kingdom basking under the benign, compassionate stewardship of a Conservative Government, yet her Government and her party are astonishingly unpopular throughout the country. We shall win the next election. I bet the hon. Lady that her party will—undoubtedly—lose the Perth and Kinross by-election in three weeks.

I shall focus my speech on Scottish maritime industries. If I get the Minister's attention for a moment, I would like to ask him a couple of questions concerning those industries. Before I turn to them, I shall make a comment or two on inward investment. I remind the House that the hon. Members for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) and for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) referred to devolution in relation to this motion. The hon. Member for Eastwood, who was until recently a Minister with responsibility for industry at the Scottish office, was understandably modest about his party's current standing in Scotland. His party was humiliated at the recent elections to the new unitary authorities.

As I said, given its industrial and other policies, the Conservative party will undoubtedly lose the by-election in Perth and Kinross. I hope sincerely that the Scottish National party does not win. It will be a close race between the SNP and the Labour party. The SNP has already engaged in a very unsavoury campaign and it does not deserve to win.

My interest in the maritime industries has been lifelong. My father was a fisherman, my mother a fishergirl. At the age of 15 it only needed the experience of one north Atlantic gale to put me ashore for ever, where I served an apprenticeship in a shipyard as a shipwright. Therefore I know something about the shipbuilding industry and the industrial relations in it.

The record of inward investment in Inverclyde, especially in Greenock is good. The hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam will be disappointed to hear that the then Labour Member of Parliament Hector McNeil, later Sir Hector McNeil, persuaded the president of IBM to

*[Dr. Norman A. Godman]*

come to Greenock and establish premises in Spango valley. That was a remarkable piece of marketing for the valley because it was a bog-like area at that time. IBM remains one of the biggest private employers in my constituency and is turning out remarkable profits based on the assembly of personal computers and related software. It offers good terms and conditions of employment to its employees, many of whom are constituents of mine. The same largely holds for National Semiconductor. The setting up of that plant predates what we now know as the Thatcher Government, to which the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant) referred. National Semiconductor is also a large employer, pays good wages and offers reasonable terms and conditions of employment.

I mildly criticised the hon. Member for Eastwood a moment ago concerning his blind spot, but I compliment him on playing an important part in bringing the enterprise zone to Inverclyde, for which he deserves some credit. Unfortunately, he and his officials at the Scottish Office designated two problem sites in that enterprise zone, one of which will never be developed. It impinges on a site of special scientific interest and the European flora and fauna directives will ensure that no development ever takes place there. There is no question of transferring or swapping sites in a zone, so that site has been written off.

There is also a problem with the Gourock ropeworks, a derelict, listed industrial building, which I would like to see demolished. The Scottish Office must act much more decisively to bring that demolition about so that, in what is left of the lifetime of the economic industrial enterprise zone, at least the existence of that site may persuade another inward investor to come to Port Glasgow. No inward investor will take over a derelict, listed building which requires many millions of pounds to renovate and conserve. It would be better if it were demolished and the site cleared for another industrial incomer.

I would like to ask the Minister a question or two concerning the shipbuilding industry. I was deeply disappointed when P and O ordered two huge cruise liners from German and Italian yards. I was very angry at the time. In fairness to P and O, it has to be readily acknowledged that no shipyard in the United Kingdom expressed the slightest interest in those two remarkable contracts, which I found deeply disquieting. Indeed, there are only two shipyards in the United Kingdom that could build ships of that size: Kvaerner Industries of Govan and Harland and Wolff of Belfast. That is a savage indictment of the way in which the industry has been allowed to run down over the past 30 or 40 years—not the past 15 years. The industry has been allowed to run down to the extent that such lucrative orders go to shipyards where the wages are even higher than those paid in the few remaining shipyards in the UK.

Almost 1,000 constituents of mine are still engaged in shipbuilding at Fergusons in Port Glasgow—two weeks ago, Princess Alexandra launched the Caledonian MacBrayne ferry for services to the Isle of Lewis—at Kvaerner of Govan and at Yarrows of Scotstown. I know that the Minister and his colleagues are opposed to subsidies of any kind, but access to the shipbuilding intervention fund under the European Union seventh directive is still hugely important to Kvaerner, Fergusons and, indeed, to Harland and Wolff.

I understand that the Government want the intervention fund to cease on 31 December. I appeal to the Minister not to allow that to happen as it would have a deleterious effect not only on the few remaining shipyards in Scotland and south of the border but on shipyards throughout the European Union. Throughout the EU, we still find it extremely difficult to compete effectively and successfully with yards in south-east Asia.

I would be grateful if the Minister would take that plea on board and if he and his ministerial colleagues would consider continuing with the directive, because it provides work in areas of massively high unemployment. One has to think only of Belfast and the people employed at Harland and Wolff and of the people employed with Kvaerner and Fergusons on the Clyde to see the directive's importance.

The United Kingdom shipbuilding industry has suffered a severe decline over the past 40 years, brought about by a combination of poor management, poor industrial relations and some very short-sighted trade union policies. I speak as a shipyard worker who, many years ago, argued with union colleagues about the need for our working practices to become as flexible as those in the many European yards. I am glad to say that Fergusons in Port Glasgow, Kvaerner in Govan and Yarrows of Scotstown have superb systems of industrial relations. I can pop in any time to the Fergusons yard to talk to managers and shop stewards. The atmosphere in the yard is very good and quite unlike the atmosphere and ambience in the yards in which I worked as a young man until I came in from the cold. I never did like clocking on at 7.30 am. I decided that there were better jobs than that.

I do not want to take up as much time as some of my colleagues. Having made my plea to the Minister, I want to raise several points about developments in the offshore oil and gas fields, for which the Minister has responsibility following the closure of the Department of Energy.

With the developments in the oil and gas fields west of Shetland, and the very important developments in the Morecambe bay field, there is a future for firms on the lower Clyde. Two rigs are being converted in my constituency at the moment. That work employs the remarkable talents and skills of welders and others in my constituency. Those people will continue to have a role in respect of conversion work to change production rigs to accommodation platforms.

Is the Minister satisfied with the operation of the Petroleum Act 1987? The responsibility for its implementation originally lay with the Department of Energy. That very fine man, the late Alick Buchanan-Smith, piloted the 1987 Act through its Committee stages. He was a remarkably popular Minister. He was also a very fair-minded adversary and remarkably popular with other Scottish Members.

From the moment Alick Buchanan-Smith piloted the Petroleum Bill through its Committee stage, I gave him notice that I would monitor its implementation. Each year since its implementation, I have tabled a batch of questions about its operation. I believe that six questions are tabled for answer on 15 May. However, I would appreciate it if the Minister, with his usual courtesy, would respond to some questions in advance of those written parliamentary answers.

When those platforms and submarine pipeline networks become redundant, they should not be abandoned and lead to the kind of escapades that we saw last weekend in respect of certain members of Greenpeace. They should be dismantled and removed from the sea bed and the sea bed should be swept clean, as is the case in Norwegian waters. That would allow our fishermen, who have readily forsaken those grounds to allow for the development of the off-shore industry, to return to fish those areas. In the main, I am obviously talking about demersal fishermen.

It is wrong to abandon those structures. They should be dismantled and removed. The Minister will confirm that that has always been the objective of Governments in Norway, whatever their persuasion. Wherever possible, they try to clean the sea bed. I know that it is enormously difficult to do that with concrete structures and that it is easier with steel structures. However, I believe that the oil and gas companies are avoiding their moral responsibility to other users of the local maritime environment, particularly the fishermen. Is it now this Government's policy to abandon those platforms and structures rather than to dismantle and remove them?

With regard to the sparse wording of the subject for debate, I believe that the experience and knowledge gained from dismantling those structures could aid us in acquiring such contracts elsewhere in the world. Because of the influence and pressure exerted by environmental lobbyists, the argument for the removal of such structures will become stronger. Abandonment presents safety problems, but that is not this Minister's responsibility. It is a matter for his colleagues in the Department of Transport. The fundamental objective should be the honouring of the obligation to commercial fishermen and other users of the maritime environment that those structures will be removed.

Long may inward investment continue. The hon. Member for Eastwood knows how much my constituency has benefited from it. Incidentally, as he has returned to the Chamber, may I tell him that I recently offered him a rare compliment in respect of his active role in establishing the Inverclyde enterprise zone and initiative? If I remember correctly, he launched that initiative in Gourock. That investment must continue.

The people of the lower Clyde are only too keen to be given work in the range of industries that is coming our way. As the hon. Member for Eastwood is aware, the Royal Bank of Scotland recently set up in Greenock. I sincerely hope that the shipbuilding industry, even in its current shrunken state, will be allowed to compete internationally. It can do that only with the help of the seventh directive on the shipbuilding intervention fund.

As the offshore industries develop to the west, that should have a beneficial effect on our fabrication yards, which are among the best in Europe. It is my fervent hope that the lower Clyde will enjoy the economic benefits of the work that I believe will come our way as a result of the developments in the west with regard to that important industry.

In terms of inward investment, our maritime industries in Scotland must be managed effectively and in the interests of everyone in them. That should embrace the interests of the traditional industries, such as fishing, as well as those of the much newer industries involved in the extraction of oil and gas from the continental shelf.

8.37 pm

**Mr. Bell:** With your permission, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and with the leave of the House, I want to reply on behalf of the Opposition.

I begin by responding to the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) and the hon. and learned Member for Harborough (Mr. Garnier), who took such a strong interest in the development of our economic policy. I was with my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) yesterday or the day before when we elaborated on that policy and, in response to the questions asked today I want to share some of the thoughts that were expressed.

We fully recognise that industrial and business communities must prosper within the framework of growth and expansion with low interest rates and low inflation. The hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) said that she believed only a Conservative Government could deliver low interest rates and low inflation, but at present both interest rates and inflation are rising. The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) referred to the meeting between the Governor of the Bank of England and the Chancellor of the Exchequer on Friday, which is not too far away. We await with interest to see what happens to interest rates after that meeting.

At his press conference on Monday, my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East referred to his "iron commitment" to establishing a stable framework of monetary and fiscal discipline for sustainable long-term growth and an "iron commitment" to macro-economic stability and financial prudence.

I enjoyed the intervention of the hon. Member for Eastwood. He referred to the general agreement on tariffs and trade. I came along to the debate armed and well prepared with a mighty thesis on GATT, the World Trade Organisation and where we go now. Unfortunately, the debate went in a different direction, and we discussed other matters such as the value of currency, which are close to the heart of the hon. and learned Member for Harborough.

I was remiss in not congratulating the hon. and learned Member for Harborough on taking silk. From one barrister to another, it was well merited. I have read in "Dod's" and "Who's Who" about his interesting career at the Bar. I am sure that he, his family and those around him will be very pleased at his elevation.

**Mr. Garnier:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his kind remarks. From an ex-client of mine, they come all the better.

**Mr. Bell:** I am very grateful. *[Interruption.]* As Conservative Members say from a sedentary position, us lawyers stay together.

Sometimes when I cannot sleep at night, I read "Das Kapital" in French, sometimes I read the 1992 Conservative manifesto, and sometimes I read old copies of *Hansard*. According to *Hansard*, the right hon. or hon. Member who replies to a debate always says, "We have had an interesting debate." We have had an interesting debate. It has ranged far and wide beyond industry, beyond trade, and even beyond inward investment. The hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam, in an interesting intervention on my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mr. Purchase), actually mentioned family values, among other subjects. One

*[Mr. Bell]*

interesting exchange between the two touched on part-time employment. It reflected how the economy has changed over many years.

As I said to the Minister for Trade, there are fewer people in work today than there were in June 1979. The composition of the number of people in work is different. In June 1994, 46 per cent. of the work force in employment were female. In June 1994, the self-employed represented 13 per cent. of the work force in employment, compared with 10 per cent. in June 1983. Again, in June 1994, 11 per cent. of male employees and 47 per cent. of female employees were part-time, and they totalled 6 million employees. We can see how society has changed in relation to employment.

The national minimum wage has weaved its way through the debate. The hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam referred to the social justice aspect of it. My hon. Friend the Member for Rotherham (Mr. MacShane) was eloquent and persuasive. He made the point—it is often overlooked by the Government—that there is a national minimum wage in the United States of America. We are consistently told how good the United States of America is in respect of job creation. I believe that Newt Gingrich supported the previous rise in the national minimum wage.

Therefore, although there is a tendency to compare the national minimum wage, which will become part of our society under the next Labour Government, with the position in France and Germany, we tend to overlook a comparison with the United States. It is because of the significance of the national minimum wage in terms of employment, the low-paid, social justice and the impact on family credit that we are taking our time. We will come up with a proper, valid minimum wage that is in the interests of the work force of this country. I reject entirely the argument that, because we believe in a national minimum wage—I have believed in it for the past 20 years—we are in hock to the unions.

The hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam, in an eloquent intervention of which Lady Thatcher would be very proud, gave the impression of Rip van Winkle. He had been asleep for 100 years, but how many years have Conservative Members been asleep? The world in which we live now is not the world of 1979 or 1978. My hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) was very frank about industrial relations at that time. None of us wants to go back to the 1970s—we cannot. We must

"see how dark the backward stream, a little moment passed so smiling."

It is always nice to throw a little poetry into our debates.

The past is the past. The great failure, if I may say so respectfully to Conservative Members, is that, by banging the drum of the past, they are not in touch with public opinion. They would be better advised to consider carefully how we develop our policies and to be critical of them as they develop, than to try to take us back to the 1970s, an age that is long gone.

The Minister for Trade was somewhat taken aback by my reference to our exports having increased by 1.5 per cent. and imports by 6 per cent. He seemed somewhat flummoxed by that. I was able to read to him from the Central Statistical Office's "First Release". The news is even worse than I thought at the time. It states:

"The value of total exports in January was £11.8 billion (1.5 per cent. more than in December).

Total imports were £13.0 billion in January (2.5 per cent. less than in December).

The latest estimates of trends in the value of trade show little change for exports and an increase for imports.

In the three months to January, exports increased by 1.5 per cent. and imports by 6 per cent."

As for the volume of trade, it states:

"In January, excluding oil and erratics, the volume of exports fell by 2 per cent. compared with December and the volume of imports fell by 3 per cent.

Trends in trade volume (excluding oil and erratics) show a decrease for exports and increasing imports.

In the three months to January, excluding oil and erratics, the volume of exports fell by 0.5 per cent. and the volume of imports rose by 5.5 per cent."

On exports and imports of unit values, it states:

In the three months to January, the unit value indices increased by 2 per cent. for exports and by 3.5 per cent. for imports leading to a 1.5 per cent. decrease in the terms of trade."

The hon. Member for Gordon said that there is a danger for the Government. They consistently fall into the trap that they set for themselves when they have good news on the increase in exports. The Minister referred to the period a year ago in respect of the 9 per cent. increase in our trade. Opposition Members who have been in the House for 12 years know all about selective statistics. It takes us a little while to get to the bottom of them. The Government use selective statistics and seek to build an economic policy around them, so it is hardly surprising that they do not hear the desired echo from the public.

The right hon. Member for Northavon (Sir J. Cope), whose contribution seems to have been made a long time ago, talked about the success of Airbus and the Groupement d'intèrêt economique, which had been its framework. The hon. and learned Member for Harborough will be tickled to know that I lived and practised in France when that framework was brought into effect. I remember, for my sins, being with Valéry Giscard d'Estaing at the Airbus factory in Toulouse when he made a speech. I followed the development of the Airbus.

My hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Gunnell)—I am glad that, bearing in mind our time constraints, he is still with us—followed the theme of inward investment and rightly linked it with regional selective assistance. He made the point that inward investment is not simply a matter of money coming into the country; there must be the co-operation and development within the country that make it possible and worth while. In other debates, hon. Members have congratulated many Labour-controlled councils that have worked with the Government to make inward investment feasible, viable and attractive.

In 1993-94, the Department of Trade and Industry spent £90 million on regional selective assistance to support investment that created or safeguarded jobs in assisted areas. During the same period, the Department expected to offer £135 million to support projects involving 30,000 jobs and a total investment of £1,000 million. Notwithstanding some of the statements made by the former Chief Secretary to the Treasury, we have always encouraged the Government to recognise the importance of the principle of regional selective assistance to inward investment.

The hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant)—who has followed the debate patiently and who, as he knows, has the affection of the House—took us on a little jaunt to the University of Southern California. He mentioned both Ronald Reagan and Benjamin Franklin; I am not sure which of the two was at university with him, although I am sure that one of them was. In any event, he enlivened our proceedings.

The hon. Gentleman also talked about GATT. I am glad to note the presence of hon. Members on both sides of the House who are aware of developments in the world trade community—and the World Trade Organisation—following the appointment of a new director general of GATT, and understand the need for a multilateral trade negotiation that will unite the world. The hon. Gentleman touched on that. He knows, I know and no doubt Ministers know that—because the Uruguay round continued for so many years—there is now a tendency towards unilateral agreements: the United States is looking for such agreements with Japan and South America in relation to financial services.

The hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire—this was first-class Labour party policy, in regard to the 28-day moratorium for companies going under—urged on the House and the Government the adoption of chapter 11 procedures. We support such policies, and I found that part of the debate interesting and constructive.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, North-East showed great experience of the House. He demonstrated that if an hon. Member is asked about, for instance, women working part time, that hon. Member can talk about Ever Ready, his council estate and the twilight hours, speaking from first-hand experience.

The hon. and learned Member for Harborough made an interesting speech, but seemed to be caught in a time warp. It is not helpful to return to the past, which may mean talking about what happened a long time ago. He spoke of the global market place; I should have liked to hear someone talk about exports into that global market by Barings, which exported £800 million into Singapore, but no one has done so. No one has pointed out that that is the unacceptable face of capitalism.

I recently made a speech in the north-east of England about how Barings had taken £800 million to Singapore—in suitcases, cheques and used notes; through bank loans; through whatever means they could. I pointed out that Barings had not invested in industry in the north-east, saying that it wanted a return on its investment. That reflects the difference between the Opposition and the Government: £800 million can be swept away, the banking system shudders but does not crumble, and nothing is invested in industry.

**Mr. Garnier:** If the hon. Gentleman thought that Barings was so important, why did he not mention it in his opening remarks?

**Mr. Bell:** I shall let the hon. and learned Gentleman into a secret. I prepared a speech that would have taken an hour and a half to deliver, because when we last debated these issues the House was less full than usual. I am glad to say, however, that tonight we have heard first-class contributions from both sides, and have been able to keep the debate going. I am sure that the part of my speech that I did not make will be delivered on another occasion, and will enliven a later debate.

The hon. and learned Gentleman referred to some of the statistics that I was examining, and expressed a hope that I would understand them. The Government's difficulty is that we understand the statistics all too well, as do the public. It does not matter whether the Prime Minister stands at the Dispatch Box and says how well we are doing in exports, or whether the Minister for Trade says how wonderfully we are doing; the figures are there, prepared by the Library of the House of Commons—and they are based on statistics for the United Kingdom balance of payments current account.

The hon. and learned Gentleman said that that account was in surplus. The invisible balance, however, tells a different story. There was a deficit of £3.1 billion in the final three months of 1994, compared to one of £1.9 billion in the previous three months and one of £3.3 billion in the final three months of 1993. The deficit for 1994 as a whole was £10.7 billion, compared to £13.4 billion in 1993.

The invisible balance helps the nation out. I am now coming to the point made by the hon. and learned Gentleman. Outward investment produces net investment income, which is fortunate—although in times of recession that money has a tendency to flow back into the country. The invisible surplus improved significantly in 1994, reaching £10.4 billion. A slightly lower surplus on services and a slightly higher deficit on transfers were more than offset by a large rise in net investment income—a point made by the hon. and learned Gentleman. The figure was £11.2 billion in 1994, compared to £1.6 billion in 1993.

The current balance was in surplus by £0.5 billion in the fourth quarter of 1994, compared to a revised estimate of £1.3 billion in the third quarter. The current account for 1994—to which the hon. and learned Gentleman referred—was in deficit by £0.4 billion. Those are the statistics; those are the facts. If the Government—on the eve of tomorrow's elections—want a better echo from the public, it is important for them to understand those statistics and then communicate them to the public with a different message from the one that they are sending now.

The hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam mentioned Toyota, but even she missed an important point that she might have made. Indeed, the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), who often graces debates such as these, might have made it for her. Toyota is to invest a further £200 million to double production at its Burnaston plant in Derbyshire. By the time the plant is in full production in 1999, it is expected to create 1,000 jobs directly and a further 3,000 with suppliers. *[Interruption.]* If the Minister for Transport in London continues to make that kind of noise from a sedentary position, I assure him that he will be here until 10 pm. Sufferance comes in gentle doses, as he knows.

Let me return to what should be, and has been, at the heart of the debate. No doubt the Minister will refer to this, as my hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South did. He said that we supported inward investment—the inward investment of Samsung in Cleveland, that of NEC in Livingston, that of Honda in Swindon, that of Motorola in East Kilbride, that of Samsung Heavy Industries in Harrogate and that of Ford in Dagenham, with its £400 million investment.

*[Mr. Bell]*

The truth is that the Government are not anxious to tell us that our own inward investment is part of a trend—the trend of taking in each other's washing in terms of trade, and investing in each other's countries in terms of finance.

My final point—that will please the Minister for Transport in London—is that we must deal with one of the most important points to come out of these debates, and it is one which shows the misconceptions of the Conservatives towards the social chapter. My hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow referred to IBM and to National Semiconductor, and described how they located in this country in the 1970s. Following those investments, 36 per cent. of world direct investment in European Community member states was in the United Kingdom, compared with 5 per cent. in Germany, 15 per cent. in France, 11 per cent. in the Netherlands and 13 per cent. in Spain.

The Invest in Britain Bureau commissioned a survey of 200 manufacturing, assembly and research and development companies that had invested in the United Kingdom. When asked their main reason for investing in the United Kingdom, 45 per cent. mentioned the need for a United Kingdom presence; 29 per cent. mentioned the need for a European base; 25 per cent. stated that their market in the United Kingdom warranted local manufacture; 16 per cent. said the English language; 14 per cent. said financial assistance; 10 per cent said labour skills; 10 per cent. said the European single market; 6 per cent. said labour costs.

Nissan said that it was interested in a good technological base in terms of people and the fact that it had a market here was important. Let us lay to rest the idea that companies will not invest in our country because of the social chapter. The hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam said that the Opposition were knocking Britain, but no one knocked Britain more than the Conservatives in the late 1970s. The hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire referred to the brain drain, which was a phrase invented at that time by the Conservatives to damage a Labour Government. Allegations and threats that the social chapter will cost jobs here because it will prevent inward investment are knocking Britain, and not knocking the Labour party.

Conservative Members who participated in the debate are now so out of touch with the people of this country that they will wake up on Friday with a shock that will be more important than they have realised. They will see how the country votes in local elections, in which they will lose thousands upon thousands of seats. If I were them and I had ears, I would hear.

9.2 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Energy (Mr. Richard Page):** The debate tonight has been based on quality, if not quantity. I can tell any hon. Member who has not been here tonight to relax, as there will be very little media comment about this debate because it has been about good news. There is good news about the United Kingdom's manufacturing, exports and inward investment, which guarantees that the debate will get no coverage in our gloom and doom-laden media.

May I first pass on an apology to the House from my right hon. Friend the Minister for Trade? He regrets that he cannot be here for the wind up, but he is the Minister responsible for promoting exports and he is attending an engagement tonight at which he will be doing just that.

I now have the slightly unpleasant task of chiding the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell), who is a big man and can take this type of remark. I must criticise him for taking a highly selective snapshot on import and export figures to bolster a rather dodgy argument. Quoting a three-month variant against a previous three-month variant is rather like quoting turkey sales just before Christmas against turkey sales just after Christmas. I am afraid that the facts presented by my right hon. Friend are more reliable and accurate.

If the hon. Member for Middlesbrough wants to do three-month comparisons, I suggest that he compares the three months he quoted with the same three months of the previous year. That is the fair thing to do. If he did that, he would see that visible exports have gone up by 12.5 per cent, while visible imports are up by only 8.9 per cent. Non-EC exports have gone up by 6.9 per cent., while imports have fallen by 7.2 per cent. That is what the hon. Gentleman should have done, rather than producing his selective figures.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Northavon (Sir J. Cope) rightly referred to the success of the airbus. He uncharitably drew the House's attention to the failure of the previous Labour Government to keep us in the scheme, and added that the Conservatives enabled us to take part in a highly profitable and successful venture. My right hon. Friend underlined the need for international partnerships in major products to achieve similar successes in the future.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) made an important point about second and third investment decisions, but he knows that those can come only if the first decision is made, and it is important to get that first decision. I shall not follow him down the devolution route, as that could occupy us for a considerable time. I agree that it is important that we send coherent and stable messages to those people who wish to invest in the United Kingdom.

My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant) always brings a degree of colour and excitement to our debates, and he correctly referred to the length of service in the Department of Trade and Industry of the President of the Board of Trade. My hon. Friend compared that with the shorter terms of his predecessors, and there is no doubt at all that the President of the Board of Trade's tenure in that position has brought stability, positive programmes and significant improvements to this country's export and manufacturing progress. He is to be congratulated on that.

I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire referred to the consultation paper which is being produced to help companies which are on the brink of collapse, by introducing a moratorium period, and the whole House welcomed that. The only thing which worried me was that I heard that the measure is Labour party policy. We will have to look closely at the measure to make sure that we are on the right lines.

My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Harborough (Mr. Garnier)—I add my congratulations to those which have been given to him—was right to

criticise the Labour party for its scaremongering. It does not help if overseas companies who wish to invest in this country hear it being run down by the Labour party. He was right to give examples of succesful companies to show how we are winning. As the House and the country know, the proof of the pudding is very much in the eating.

The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) mentioned the opportunities in the offshore construction industries. He knows of the successes that are being achieved in supplying the fields in the North sea, and the west of Shetland will open up a completely new vista. I know just how hard the oil and gas division of the Department of Trade and Industry is working to ensure that British firms supply the equipment. He mentioned abandonment policies and, in the fullness of time, I look forward to receiving his letters so that I can reply. In the meantime, I can tell him that policy is under active consideration. I look forward to consultation with the industry on the best way to achieve the environmental balances to which he referred.

**Mr. Bell:** The Minister is referring to my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) and during my speech I said that IBM had gone to Greenock in the 1970s. In fact, IBM went to Greenock in 1950.

**Mr. Page:** Well done and thank you.

When considering the tone of this debate, hon. Members will come to the conclusion that the Opposition are struggling to come to terms with today's increasingly integrated world economy. They are off stage, desperately congratulating themselves on dropping clause IV. What an achievement—managing to ditch the ideas of the 19th century, just as we are about to enter the 21st.

Conservative Members have clearly won the argument in this debate. We have won because our policies are coherent and the only ones that will produce a thriving business base.

Back in 1979, Britain was in continuing decline. Strikes were crippling industry, we were losing world market share and we had cash-devouring and inefficient state monopolies. I am grateful to the Labour Government because, at that time of 26 per cent. inflation, with the IMF calling us a banana republic, I managed to come to this House as the Member for Workington. It was a time when the Conservative party won by-elections.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley** (Eltham): Yes, there was a Labour Government then.

**Mr. Page:** There was—I remember that winter of discontent.

I welcome the courage that the hon. Member for Rotherham (Mr. MacShane) demonstrated by talking about the steel industry. I well remember that industry. It was costing us £450 million a year in running costs. We had already put in £4 billion, but it was still losing money. Today, strikes in the industry are the lowest since records began in 1891. My hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) rightly drew our attention to that significant and dramatic improvement.

We are gaining world share in manufacturing for the first time. Exports are at record levels, despite the tinkerings of the hon. Member for Middlesbrough, who was trying to make out that we are not doing as well. Manufacturing investment is up—by 8 per cent. in the last year—output has been rising for three years and unemployment has been falling during the same period. Inflation is under control at historically low rates and there is every sign that those trends will continue. Those are the hammer blows of success that the Opposition can try to spirit away if they wish, but they are genuine and they are being achieved.

The United Kingdom is more internationally competitive than at any time in recent history. We have world-class manufacturing companies and a world-class service sector. How else could we do so well in services in the United States of America, where we are the number one overseas supplier, with 13 per cent. of the market? That is even more than the Canadians, who have a natural local advantage.

The Government have already done much for industry, but there is more to be done. First, I will tell the House what we will not do. We will not turn the clock back; let inflation loose; have punitive tax rates; let the state make decisions that are best left to managers operating under market conditions; or interfere in the pay arrangements of business.

While Opposition Members are holding sterile debates about what happened yesterday, we are taking practical steps to improve further our competitive position and drawing on the strengths of Government and business to create a partnership to develop more world-class firms.

**Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** How will the war against inflation be sustained against the background of a falling pound and rising commodity prices? It is all very well saying that the trends are good and that that will continue, but how can the Minister be sure of that? Can he explain why industry is not confident that will happen? That lack of confidence is holding back the investment that we need.

**Mr. Page:** The hon. Gentleman answered his own question, if he only realised it. Manufacturing investment is increasing. That sort of investment in robotics and automatic machines will produce lower unit costs, which will enable us to take more of our market share. That in turn will mean more orders and we will be at the creation of a virtuous circle. That is why our share in world markets is increasing. That is the trouble with the Opposition. They are shaking their heads. They want the country to do badly and yet the figures show how much more—and how well—we are doing.

What else have we got to do? We have to help small and medium-sized companies and boost and support their growth. I would like to spend considerable time talking about what we are doing to help, especially with the business link network, but that should wait for another day and another debate.

By the end of the year, there will be more than 200 business links, giving a single coherent signpost to businesses, to which they can go to get the type of support that they need to expand and develop.

On the international scene, hon. Members should look at how our partnership works on exports. More than 200 business people advise UK companies and more than 100 experienced executives have been seconded by major companies to help the effort. Indeed, major companies are now using secondment to the DTI as a useful part of the career development of their senior staff. I pay tribute to companies that have released well-paid, experienced and knowledgeable members of their staff to come and help

*[Mr. Page]*

UK Ltd. win on the world scene. There is continual dialogue with businesses and their representatives to focus our efforts in each of the United Kingdom's top 80 markets. We have more ministerial visits abroad than ever before. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Trade is not here, but he has been a shining example of what the Government have been doing to help Britain's industry to go forward.

Let us return to privatisation. The Opposition simply have not learnt and we hear criticism of privatisation wherever we go. On the privatisation of British Gas, the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) said that 16 million gas consumers could expect only one result—to pay increased gas prices, higher than the rate of inflation, for years to come. He was wrong. Domestic gas prices have fallen by 23 per cent. in real terms since privatisation and investment has tripled.

On the Electricity Bill, the right hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) said that, in exchange for having no choice, we would have the reality of higher prices. He managed to make two errors in 14 words. Although the privatisation was relatively recent, prices have already fallen and will do so again. Every person who lives in the London Electricity area has received a note with their electricity bill, which says:

"Prices are down again. For the third year in a row, London Electricity is reducing its prices. The main reduction will be in standing charges, which will be cut on average by 7 per cent. Unit charges are also going down by 2 per cent."

It is all good news. Since 1990, the number of electricity disconnections has dropped from over 55,000 to just 1,180 last year.

I could go on and on about the knocking of privatisation. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garsgadden (Mr. Dewar) said that British Airways would be the pantomime horse of capitalism. It is the world's most successful airline. The right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) said that he had heard that public call boxes could be threatened with extinction, but BT has increased the network by over 50 per cent. to 127,000 call boxes and, instead of only 75 per cent. of them working at any one time, the figure has now risen to 96 per cent. Labour Members may have taken clause IV out of the party's constitution, but it will not erase what it represents from the constitutions of party members.

Even last night on the Atomic Energy Authority Bill, the Opposition had a shining opportunity to say that they would not oppose the privatisation of AEA Technology. Clause IV may not be up in front, but it is still in their hearts and they voted against giving staff members of AEA Technology a chance to run an operation for themselves.

Instead of facing the facts, Opposition Members do not admit that nationalised industries were a terrible drain on the economy. As my right hon. Friend the Minister for Trade said in his opening remarks, they were costing the taxpayer £50 million a week in 1979. Now they cost nothing but contribute to the Exchequer to the tune of £50 million a week.

Those utilities were not just ornaments. One has only to look at one or two of them to see how well they are doing. BT's productivity is up by 135 per cent. since privatisation. Prices have fallen by 35 per cent.; a 250,000 waiting list has been abolished; and BT has invested some £22 billion at home. The same applies to Mercury, which has invested 2.7 billion. The list goes on and on.

No wonder the world is queuing up to copy us.

The world continues to try to invest in the United Kingdom. Inward investment is one of our success stories because, flowing from the economic policies that we pursue, we offer a competitive advantage. As my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam has already said, that means low inflation. low taxes and good industrial relations. It is an achievement and a success, as the hon. Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Gunnell) admitted through gritted teeth. Investors are looking for a location which will give them the best mix of quality and cost, a stable economic system, a skilled and creative work force and lower cost production.

The Opposition have heard it all before and will hear it again and again. As a result of that inward investment, the United Kingdom has 40 per cent. of United States and Japanese investment in the European Union. Samsung's plant in the north-east will bring 50 per cent. of South Korea's investment to the United Kingdom. We welcome all that unreservedly.

Inward investment will give us even greater growth, but already it is giving us one fifth of manufacturing employment, one fifth of manufacturing output and one third of capital expenditure, while 40 per cent. of United Kingdom exports originate from foreign-owned companies and 35 overseas companies won the Queen's award for export achievements in 1995. But that is not all. We get the new technology and the new ideas, so it is a two-way process. The new companies coming in bring their new technologies and help to enrich the base of knowledge and expertise in Britain.

The Government welcome the debate. We have shown during the course of it that, far from having no policies on industry, exports and inward investment, the Government have a consistent approach based on all the factors that have been mentioned. I commend the Government's policies to the House. Only by the continuation of those policies shall we reap the benefits of the great investment that we, as a nation, have put into reclaiming our business heritage.

**Mr. Michael Bates** (Langbaurgh): I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

*Motion, by leave, withdrawn.*

## Bicycle Helmets

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Bates.]*

9.21 pm

**Sir Anthony Durant** (Reading, West): I am pleased to have the opportunity to raise the subject of bicycle helmets for children. I do so for two reasons. First, the Royal Berkshire hospital in Reading has set up an organisation called Childhood Injury Prevention Service—CHIPS. It is run by Nurse Angela Lee, a clinical nurse specialist in the hospital who, because of her experience with young people coming in with head injuries from cycling, has started a campaign in support of bicycle helmets.

My second reason is a personal one. When I was a young boy of 11 or 12, my best friend died following a cycling accident. He hit a tree root in a wood, went over his bike handlebars, damaged his skull and brain and subsequently died. Therefore, I have a personal interest in the subject.

There is no doubt that, compared with the rest of the European Community, Britain has a good road accident record. In 1980, the United Kingdom had the best rate of deaths resulting from road accidents per million of the population, at 111, compared with the EC average of 184. In 1990, we slipped to second place at 94, behind the Netherlands at 92. The EC average was 153. Therefore, there was still a downward trend in Britain.

For the age group nought to 14, in 1980 and 1990 the United Kingdom had the best percentage rate in Europe, at 41.9 and 36.1 respectively, the European average being 69.6 and 47.1. Those figures come from the Department of Transport's international comparisons of transport statistics for 1970-90.

The same report also gives comparisons on the deaths of all pedal cyclists. Again, the United Kingdom is doing quite well. In 1980, the figure in the United Kingdom was 5.6 per million of the population, and the EC average was 14 per million. In 1990, the figure for the United Kingdom was 4.7, and the EC average was 9.8.

Other countries, such as Spain, Greece and Luxembourg, seem to do better, but that is probably because of the different number of cyclists in different countries.

In the Adjournment debate on road safety, the Minister who is kindly answering this debate said:

"There are several times more accidents to cyclists per cycle mile"—

the amount of bicycle use—

"in this country than there are in countries where cycling is practised so much more."—[*Official Report*, 25 November 1994; Vol. 250, c. 840.]

Those countries include Germany and the Netherlands.

The Policy Studies Institute makes a similar point. Cyclists in Great Britain account for only 1 per cent. of personal travel kilometres, but for 5 per cent. of road fatalities, so reducing accident rates for cyclists should perhaps be a priority.

Let us consider the number of cyclist fatalities. In 1993, there were 186. Serious injuries in 1993 totalled 3,610. Serious or slight injuries in 1993 totalled 23,574. In the Thames valley area, in 1993 there were seven fatalities and 904 serious or slight injuries.

A chart shows deaths in the various age groups from 1988 to 1992. There were 11 deaths among children aged one to four, 233 deaths among those aged five to 14, and 240 deaths among people 15 to 24. About two thirds of all cycle deaths are due to head injuries, but, for the age group five to 14, 82 per cent. of deaths—about four out of five—are due to such injuries.

As part of the "Health of the Natfon" strategy, the Government hope to reduce the death rate for accidents among children aged under 15 by at least 33 per cent. by the year 2005—they want to reduce it from 6.7 per 100,000 of the population in 1990 to no more than 4.5 per 100,000 in 2005. They aim also to reduce the death rate for accidents among young people aged 15 to 24 by at least 25 per cent. by 2005—from 23.2 per 100,000 of the population in 1990 to no more than 17.4 per 100,000. The Government therefore take accidents among children seriously.

In written answers on this subject in June 1992, the then Minister with responsibility for roads and traffic quoted research from the Transport Research Laboratory which suggested that helmets would prevent 11 per cent. of serious head injuries, with a further 18 per cent. becoming only slight injuries. Many other answers were given over various times.

The Australians have spent more than a decade in promoting, educating, and then legislating on, bicycle helmet use. The United States of America has invested resources, and a number of states have introduced laws on bicycle helmets. Canada is taking an active line, and, Sweden has a progressive helmet policy. New Zealand is in its second year of mandatory helmet use.

As a form of head protection, helmets have proved their capability for reducing head injury and severe of brain injury. Time and again, studies appear that demonstrate the benefit of the helmet in reducing the effect of an injury that can have such tragic, and all too often everlasting, consequences for the individual and his family.

The "Helmet Your Head" campaign based at the Royal Berkshire and Battle hospitals NHS trust, led by Sister Angela Lee, is actively promoting the use of bicycle helmets among the under-16s. The initiative has run since June 1992. It started from a purely emotive response to treating a continuous toll of young people with head or brain injuries. A number of those proved fatal, but many more people were left with long-term problems.

The campaign has proved successful. Helmet use has trebled, and the number of under-16s seeking casualty treatment for bicycle-related head injuries has decreased by 45 per cent. over the two-year period.

The helmet programme is educational, and provides the ability to purchase helmets at low cost. The campaign is run by taking into account the teenage group's fundamental concerns. Those were obtained through a questionnaire targeted specifically at the 11 to 16 age range. The teenagers' main concern was "image"—having the credibility to don a helmet, but, at the same time, maintaining their street credibility. The other factor that reduced helmet use was simply the cost of helmets.

Young people understand the benefits of wearing helmets, although they also seek justification to do so. That has been shown by young persons' support of helmet legislation. The teenager looks on legislation as an endorsement of his use of a helmet—a form of justification to his friends.

*[Sir Anthony Durant]*

We are still, however, a long way from mandatory helmet use in the United Kingdom. The first thing we need is a systematically active nationwide programme on helmet education and helmet purchase schemes, if we are not just planning to pay lip service to the issue.

There appear to be three stumbling blocks in the way of the wholehearted adoption of bicycle helmets. The first is the idea of risk transfer, or risk compensation. That has no scientific basis in relation to cyclists, especially the young person who, because of his youth, is adventurous, carefree and less concerned about what may happen. There is no evidence available for the theory, so it is unfounded and has served only to cause confusion and to distract people from the issue of head injury reduction.

The second cause of delay in the promotion of helmets is the attempt to blame our road system and the motorist. There is a valid argument about road structure and motorists' lack of judgment concerning cyclists, but those factors will persist, especially as decisions on vast expenditure to alter small and overcrowded roads will continue to be a problem, and will remain an issue into the next century. While the argument continues, cyclists will continue to sustain head injuries, unless policy makers stop playing Russian roulette and acknowledge helmets as a form of protection that is accessible straight away, or certainly purchasable within 24 hours.

Thirdly, there is an argument that helmets are designed for limited-impact crashes, and are therefore of little use when the cyclist is involved with a car. However, the current research findings from Australia are that helmets provided protection in most impacts sustained in such collisions. Moreover, even if the protection provided by the helmet is limited, common sense suggests that an impact-absorbing helmet must surely reduce the impact acceleration to the brain more than if the impact were directly on the skull.

Accidents are the major cause of death in young people over the age of one year. About eight out of 10 children ride bicycles, and it is estimated that about 100,000 people under 16 require hospital treatment for bicycle-related injuries every year. That figure accounts for more than half of treated casualties. As more than 50 per cent. of bicycle casualties sustain an injury to their heads—that is, an injury above the neck—in crude terms that means that another child is being treated every 10 minutes.

Helmet campaigns work. The Royal Berkshire hospital's programme is at present the United Kingdom's only co-operating helmet programme centre, as part of the World Health Organisation's global helmet programme. Helmet programmes have been shown to be effective all over the world. Programmes such as those in Australia, the "safe kids" projects in the United States, and the Swedish helmet campaign, all strive to promote helmets.

Such campaigns do not take the place of better cycle paths, nor do they transfer responsibility away from motorists. They are simply an effective method of protecting a vital functioning part of the individual who, in the unfortunate event of his risking a head injury by coming off his bicycle, will have an extra head covering that can reduce the impact acceleration to his head.

As part of the "Health of the Nation" targets, along with the Government's road casualty reduction targets, a more active stance must be taken if we are to move more effectively to promote helmets as a method of health protection. Health professionals have a direct responsibility to advocate their use. A unified display in hospital units, casualty departments, health centres, dentists' waiting rooms and schools could bring about greater awareness and more encouragement of helmet use.

Brain injuries are devastating. Bicycle helmets have a place in their reduction. Any further procrastination will be measured in human loss. Tomorrow may be too late. Therefore, there must immediately be more encouragement by the Government to make people wear cycle helmets.

The Department must also discuss with the Chancellor the problems caused by levying VAT on child helmets. If there is no VAT on children's clothes, perhaps there should be none on child helmets. Finally, in connection with any future road safety legislation or road traffic regulations, the Government must seriously consider making the wearing of helmets compulsory for cyclists under 16.

9.32 pm

**Mr. Peter Bottomley** (Eltham): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Reading, West (Sir A. Durant) for allowing me to join in this short Adjournment debate.

Oleg Gordievsky, who played such a remarkable part in drawing the cold war to an end, nearly lost his life when he went through the windscreen of a car in a lane in this country. His life was saved because he was wearing a cycle helmet.

If brave people such as he would appear on children's television—or on parents' television—to say that it is not only fashionable and, as my hon. Friend said, goes with the right image, but that it makes sense to wear a lid when we go cycling, many more people would say, "If you can afford a bike, you can't afford not to have a helmet."

I pay tribute to my hon. Friend's remarkable speech, and to Sister Angela Lee of the Royal Berkshire hospital. They have both done a great service. It is sad that, 10 years ago, the Cyclists Touring Club, which did and still does so much to promote cycling, opposed cycle helmets on the ground that it was up to other road users to protect cyclists.

It is right that anyone who passes the driving test should be required to know the answer to the question of when a cyclist is most likely to be injured, which is either when other motor vehicles are turning left, or at roundabouts. There must be an awareness of that. Even so, there will be times when cyclists will come off their bikes because the screw that holds the front mudguard on has worked loose, the mudguard drops on the front wheel and the cyclist goes head over heels—that is where the protection will be necessary.

Nobody in the House could have made a better speech than my hon. Friend the Member for Reading, West. He said that, as *The New England Journal of Medicine* stated about nine years ago, about two thirds of dead cyclists have only a head injury, and about two thirds of those fatal head injuries would not have been fatal had the cyclists worn helmets. That does not excuse what other road users do, and I am not pretending that every cyclist always obeys the highway code, but the wearing of helmets would be a good way of reducing the number of deaths and serious injuries.

Much has been done with the help of the Department of Transport and the highway authorities. One example is the bicycle bridge at Cambridge—with the remarkable distinction of the big upturned "V" which holds the bridge across the 16 tracks of railway to keep the cyclists away from the through traffic. There are many other such examples, but whatever else is done, the cycle helmet makes a difference, in the same way that the seat belt makes a difference to those who travel in cars.

About 300 people a year used to die cycling; that figure is now down to about 230. The growing fashion of wearing cycle helmets is part of that progress. My hon. Friend was right not to argue for an instant law stating that cycle helmets would have to be worn. He is right to say that, if we can build up voluntary use and understanding, the trend will grow. There is currently a correspondence in the *British Medical Journal* about the experience in Australia. One factor that is accepted by all sides is that it is sensible to wear a helmet in case one has a crash on a bicycle.

I wish to comment on risk compensation, or what is otherwise known as homeostasis theory. It was put forward by Mayer Hillman, who received undue publicity with a juicy headline on a press notice about some research that he had carried out. I pay tribute to Mayer Hillman, because he has rightly argued that, if we had common sense time in winter in this country, we would save 100 lives and many injuries.

However, he is wrong to say that we should be careful about cycle helmets. I do not believe that any cyclist would ride more adventurously because he or she was wearing a helmet. I do not think that it is only those cyclists who are careful about their security who wear cycle helmets. Any parent or school that allows children to cycle to school should not only help them to work out a safe route for cycling, but should ensure that they wear safe gear, so that they are visible, and helmets.

During the time that I served at the Department of Transport, I would have given my eye teeth to have the skill of my hon. Friend the Minister for Transport in London and to be able to announce that the road deaths were 3,700 or fewer a year. I pay tribute to him for being sensible. I am glad that he is here, and I hope that the reports of our Adjournment debate—even though, when we look at the Press Gallery, we discover that not everyone is there—will show that the issues we have discussed are just as important as British exports or the earlier questions that attracted the glamour and attention.

Nobody wants their child, husband, wife or parent to die unnecessarily in a bicycle crash. My hon. Friend the Member for Reading, West has described one of the ways of cutting the risk dramatically.

9.38 pm

**The Minister for Transport in London (Mr. Steve Norris):** I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Reading, West (Sir A. Durant) on having secured tonight's debate on what, I agree, is an extremely important subject. I join my hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) in congratulating Angela Lee at the Royal Berkshire hospital.

As I think my hon. Friend knows, I was a member of the West Berkshire district health authority for some years, and, before that, of the Berkshire area health authority. I therefore have a great deal of experience of the Royal Berks, and much respect for the people who work there and the facilities available. I share my hon. Friends' objective. I too want cyclists to use helmets. The Government actively promote their use, particularly by children.

The issue that I want to discuss this evening is why, none the less, we do not have any plans at present to make it an offence to cycle without a helmet. I say that with the strong caveat that that does not suggest for one second any lack of concern or seriousness on my behalf or that of the Department about the issue.

I have become convinced in the past few years, as I have grappled with transport policy, in the wake of the excellent contribution of my hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) to the Department of Transport, which is still much remembered with great affection and respect, that cycling has been hugely undervalued in Britain. We do about 2.5 per cent. of all our journeys by bicycle. That compares with a European average of about 15 per cent. It includes countries such as Holland, which we think of simply as flat, and therefore rather susceptible to cycling. It also includes Switzerland. Whatever one says about Switzerland, it is not flat.

My hon. Friend the Member for Reading, West made the point that cycle injury rates show that one is about 10 times more likely to be injured in a cycle accident in Denmark than in Britain. I wonder whether that could have something to do with the fact that there is 10 times more cycling in Denmark than in the United Kingdom. The two are clearly related.

At the same time, cycling is a marvellous way to get about, particularly for short journeys. We published some research yesterday or the day before which showed that the quickest way that one can achieve any short journey in London is not by the private car but simply by cycling. Cycling was the quickest mode of transport. Many people in the House and elsewhere are coming to see that as something that they can use much to their advantage.

We are dealing not simply with the problem relating to our present cycle use. In a sense, we want to expand cycling as a means of transport to European levels. That means expanding it by considerable orders of magnitude. If we are to do that, the problem of cycle safety and the issue of how we persuade more people to wear cycle helmets become even more serious and important.

I shall not go over the casualty figures that my hon. Friend the Member for Reading, West mentioned. Suffice it to say that we now record fewer fatal and serious road accidents than in any year since records began in 1926. That is the most extraordinary achievement, and one attributable not to parties of the left or right but to dedicated officials and road safety officers, and people such as Miss Lee, up and down the country over the years. We are killing fewer people now, despite a fourteenfold increase in traffic. That is very good.

However, as my hon. Friends have pointed out, 174 cyclists were killed in 1994, about 4,000 were seriously injured and more than 20,000 received slight injuries. The tragedy is that 44 of those fatalities were to children aged 15 or below. There can be little doubt that, if every cyclist wore an approved helmet, those accident figures would be considerably reduced.

Last year, my Department commissioned the Transport Research Laboratory to review international research into the effectiveness of cycle helmets. That report looked at

*[Mr. Steve Norris]*

more than 50 separate research projects. It found that researchers worldwide were in agreement that cycle helmets could substantially reduce head injuries.

While helmets cannot prevent accidents, research shows that they are worth while. For example, one report concluded that, if all cyclists wore helmets, 30 per cent. of slightly injured cyclists would be uninjured, 11 per cent. of seriously injured cyclists would avoid injury and a further 18 per cent. of serious injuries would be reduced to slight injuries.

Children in particular can benefit from wearing cycle helmets. That is absolutely beyond peradventure. Our hospital-based research shows that 75 per cent. of cycle accidents to children aged 12 and under involved no other vehicle. Performing tricks, travelling too fast or simply falling off are the most important causes of accidents.

Nevertheless, more than 50 per cent. of injury accidents to cyclists involve some form of injury to the head, and the protection provided by a helmet is likely to be particularly effective for the type of relatively low-speed accident in which no other vehicle is involved. Against that background, one can fully understand the calls from my hon. Friend and others that we should move as fast as we can to make the wearing of cycle helmets compulsory.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** The ambition we all share is to increase the wearing of helmets. I think that there would be support across the House for my hon. Friend the Minister's practical approach, which is the most effective one. Very few want to wave the magic wand of regulation. An increase in helmet wearing is what Sister Angela Lee and others have been pressing for.

**Mr. Norris:** In the next few minutes, I hope to rationalise the attitude that we are adopting and explain why I think we are on the right track, despite the fact that there are arguments for regulation and, as has been said, considerable arguments against.

There are clear benefits to be gained from wearing a cycle helmet. When introducing measures to protect people from injury—this is as true of seat belts as of cycle helmets—experience shows that there needs to be a high degree of public acceptance and voluntary wearing before compulsion can be considered if it is to be successful.

More than 80 per cent. of motor cyclists were voluntarily wearing helmets before that requirement became compulsory. Countries that introduced motor cycle helmet laws without previously having achieved high levels of voluntary wearing found that the new law was widely ignored, to the point that the legislation became worthless.

It is regrettable that some cyclists themselves are not in favour of wearing a helmet. Some cite civil liberty, which is perfectly understandable, although I think that the safety argument is more compelling. Some argue that it would be a disincentive to taking up cycling if we insisted that people wear a helmet. Both my hon. Friends have in their various ways disposed of that argument. A cycle helmet is now almost a mandatory fashion accessory rather than a great burden that the new cyclist has to bear, so I do not think that we need be detained by that argument.

A stronger argument is that we should not be considering making people dress up in body armour if they want to cycle, but that we should be making the roads safer. That, of course, sounds a very compelling argument, but the trouble with it is that it addresses the wrong issue.

I said that a large proportion of cycle accidents do not involve another vehicle. They do not involve a child being knocked off his bike by a juggernaut or by a car passing at high speed; they involve a child simply falling off his bike. Adults do it, too. The wearing of a helmet is just as important in that type of accident, however.

The risk compensation theory is very simple when one boils it down—I nearly said, "when one reduces it to absurdity", but I should not discredit the theory in that way, because it has some serious adherents, such as Mayer Hillman and John Adams. Basically, it says that one feels so much more comfortable when protected by a seat belt that one is tempted to drive much faster, which means that one is therefore less safe. In other words, the safer one feels, the less safe one is.

The logical deduction is that my job as Minister with responsibility for road safety should be to make cars as dangerous as I possibly can, to abandon all expenditure on road safety and, indeed, to reverse it by introducing a number of chicanes and abolishing most urban speed limits, because, on that basis, we could make life sufficiently dangerous that everyone would drive at a snail's pace and accidents would cease.

That is a fair summary of the theory, and I do not suppose that I need detain the House any further by seeking to analyse it or dismissing it. I just think that it is desperately misleading to pursue that course. We must make people not only feel safer, but be safer. Everyone understands that.

I get letters from parents who ask me to make helmet wearing compulsory because, they say, their children would obey the law whereas they do not obey their parents. There is a real problem with that, as you well know, Madam Deputy Speaker. Making children below the age of criminal responsibility the criminals is not only paradoxical, but almost certainly self-defeating. In reality, one cannot go down that path. If we want to turn large numbers of children into criminals or even to dissuade them from cycling in the first place, there is no better way to do it. That does not mean that I do not think that there is value in compulsion in due course.

The experience of the Australian state of Victoria is rather helpful here. Cycle helmets were made compulsory there in 1990. The state undertook a lengthy, 10-year campaign to encourage voluntary wearing before compulsion was introduced. Nevertheless, it appeared that, during the first year, wearing rates did not exceed 75 per cent., despite a considerable enforcement effort.

Although the amount of adult cycling remained stable, it appeared that the introduction of helmet laws reduced the number of children, especially teenagers, who cycled. Since then, cycling by young people appears to be increasing again, although a not insignificant minority of cyclists continue to refuse to wear a helmet. I say for the record, however, that there is no doubt that the Victoria experiment has introduced greater helmet use, and has therefore reduced the number and severity of head injuries.

We have commissioned further research from the Transport Research Laboratory into cycle helmet wearing rates and public attitudes to helmets, and we shall publish it later this year. It looks as if the overall UK voluntary wearing rate, based on a survey of 10,000 cyclists throughout the country, is about 15 per cent. We shall continue to survey wearing rates over time to monitor the degree of voluntary use.

I want to convince cyclists of the good sense of helmet wearing and to continue to develop strategies to drive up the voluntary wearing rate. To that end, we are also researching attitudes to helmet wearing among cyclists to help us to develop new ways in which to encourage their use.

**Sir Anthony Durant:** One of the things that I have found in talking to schoolchildren is that there is still a view that those who wear a helmet are rather sissy. An education programme is therefore necessary to convince children that those who wear helmets are not sissies, but very wise guys.

**Mr. Norris:** My hon. Friend makes a good point. One of our counters to that view is an initiative, which appears to have been very successful, to apply the cycle helmet rule on a whole-school basis. That makes a great deal of sense. It works on the basis that, if everyone cycling to school wears a helmet, the fear of ridicule tends to be overcome.

Several local authorities have copied a scheme, which was first introduced by Sheffield city council, to promote helmets by making them available to schools at a much-reduced price, provided that rules are introduced requiring helmets to be worn when cycling to and from school. Such initiatives seem to be effective, and they are to be applauded. My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to that point.

For the past few years, the Department of Transport has actively promoted cycle helmet use. The highway code advises cyclists to wear helmets which conform to recognised safety standards. Child cycle helmets are zero-rated for VAT purposes. In 1991, we screened a television advertisement called "Tough nuts are hard to crack," which was later turned into a television filler; it was a very good piece of work.

The on-going "cycle safe" campaign, launched in March 1993 to encourage safer cycling, was spearheaded by a television advertisement, "Brother", which again stressed the benefits of cycle helmet wearing. Last year, "cycle safe" issued four new posters encouraging cyclists of all ages, especially children, to wear cycle helmets. The posters spelled out the message with slogans such as

"Wear a Helmet—You can't recycle a cyclist",

and

"Don't hit the road without one."

Such slogans are sufficiently attractive and catchy to make young people appreciate that they need not feel that wearing a helmet is somehow deeply unfashionable, but that it is something done by sensible people of all ages.

For the reasons that I have outlined, we do not believe that we can yet move to compulsion. We are, however, keen to do what we can to develop our strategy of advertising the benefits of helmets and, indeed, of safe cycling in general. If we are to persuade more people to leave their cars at home and travel by bike, we need to encourage them to have greater confidence in the fact that there is a safe, efficient and environmentally friendly alternative to the motor car. The effect of promotion of the benefits of cycle helmet wearing will continue to be an integral part of that policy.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Adjourned accordingly at five minutes to Ten o'clock.*

# House of Commons

*Thursday 4 May 1995*

*The House met at half-past Two o'clock*

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

## PRIVATE BUSINESS

CITY OF WESTMINSTER BILL *[Lords]*

*Order for consideration read.*

*To be considered on Thursday 11 May.*

# Oral Answers to Questions

## AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

### Agricultural Surpluses

1. **Mr. Davidson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will take steps to make common agricultural policy surpluses available for distribution throughout the United Kingdom by the intervention board in the same manner as existing surplus beef stocks are distributed. [20809]

**The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Michael Jack):** The level of intervention stocks both in the United Kingdom and in the European Union as a whole has fallen dramatically and the introduction of additional disposal measures would not be justified.

**Mr. Davidson:** Is the Minister aware that 160,000 tins of EC surplus beef are being delivered to my constituency tomorrow for distribution to my constituents? Will he join me in welcoming the actions of volunteers who are prepared to distribute that beef to my constituents? Does he further agree that it would be far better if the surplus butter and cheese currently held in stocks was distributed to my constituents, many of whom are also willing to help the Government reduce the EC wine lake by being prepared to dispose of some of the stocks personally?

**Mr. Jack:** I certainly join the hon. Gentleman in thanking all the voluntary organisations which give so freely of their time, energy and effort to ensure that the stocks can reach those eligible to receive them. The hon. Gentleman may not be aware that we are spending the full allocation of £26 million on the distribution of beef. He may also not be aware that butter is not included because, since the changes in the common agricultural policy, we no longer have enough stocks to justify national distribution. At present there are only three days' equivalent stock in store in the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Clifton-Brown:** Can my hon. Friend confirm that intervention stocks of beef, cereals and butter have been reduced dramatically since 1993? Will he give the percentage reductions and confirm that that is very good news for the taxpayer as it has reduced expenditure on intervention stocks under the common agricultural policy?

**Mr. Jack:** My hon. Friend, who takes a keen interest in these matters, is absolutely right in his line of questioning. Compared with the peak in 1993, total expenditure on this budget head has dropped by 44 per cent. in terms of Community money for the disposal of surpluses. With regard to the specific areas that my hon. Friend requested, the answer is that there has been a 73 per cent. drop in cereals, a 95 per cent. drop in beef stocks and an 84 per cent. drop in butter stocks since 1993. As my hon. Friend will appreciate, if we carry on like that there will be no beef in intervention at the end of the year, which clearly brings the future of this type of disposal into question.

### Fur Farming

2. **Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about fur farming. [20933]

**The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mrs. Angela Browning):** Welfare conditions are monitored regularly by the State Veterinary Service on the basis of recommendations adopted by the Council of Europe. The Ministry is responsible for the issue of licences to keep mink in secure conditions.

**Mrs. Roche:** Does the Minister accept that there is great concern among many people, including my constituents who are concerned about animal welfare, about keeping arctic foxes in cages? Should not that practice be banned immediately?

**Mrs. Browning:** The hon. Lady will know that the Golding report of 1994, as considered by the Farm Animal Welfare Council, covered the question of arctic foxes. We have consulted on the matter and are currently considering whether further action is needed.

**Lady Olga Maitland:** Will my hon. Friend confirm that every fur farm is visited by the State Veterinary Service to ensure that the very highest standards are maintained?

**Mrs. Browning:** Yes, I can confirm that. In addition, they receive visits from the Agricultural Development Advisory Service in respect of their licensing conditions.

**Mr. Tony Banks:** The Minister knows that I took evidence to one of her predecessors showing many clear examples of mink farms not following any acceptable standards. Why on earth do we allow fur farming in this country? It is a barbaric practice and we should stop it.

**Mrs. Browning:** There are two key points. First, if the hon. Gentleman has evidence, I shall be happy to look at it again as I did not deal with the matter when he originally made his complaints. If he will furnish me with the evidence that he gave to my predecessor, I will look at the individual cases again.

Secondly, the hon. Gentleman will know that although the FAWC report disapproved of fur farms, it did not recommend that they should be banned. He will also be aware that there has been quite a significant drop, particularly in the number of mink farms.

### Environmentally Sensitive Areas

3. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to take forward the environmentally sensitive area scheme. [20934]

**The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. William Waldegrave):** The scheme has been an outstanding success as I saw on recent visits to Halvergate marshes in Norfolk and the mountains of Mourne in Newry and Mourne.

**Mr. Bruce:** My right hon. Friend will know that the environmentally sensitive areas in my constituency, and the farmers who care for them, are thankful for the grants that are being made and that not only is that good for farmers and the environment, but it is good for tourism. Will he look at the effects that the Agricultural Tenancies Bill will have on the way in which environmentally sensitive area levies and grants are paid to tenant farmers or to landlords or to a combination of the two, as that matter is causing some concern to many farmers locally?

**Mr. Waldegrave:** I agree with my hon. Friend and many other people that the environmentally sensitive areas scheme has been an outstanding success. What started all those years ago in the Halvergate marshes became a European movement and was the beginning of the greening of agricultural policy more widely in Europe. We in this country, through individual campaigners such as Andrew Lees, academics such as Professor O'Riordan and even the Ministers who were involved at the time, take genuine pride in that.

On my hon. Friend's point about the Agricultural Tenancies Bill, I think that the new farm business tenancies will help as we know that quite a lot of farmers have been having to take tenancies on short lets because that is all that is available. In those situations, there has to be a complicated negotiation with the landlord because the scheme has to be joined for five years at a time. Once it becomes easier for farmers to get tenancies of rather longer duration, that will simplify the system and benefit the farmers concerned.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** Should a farmer be able to make a profit out of an environmentally sensitive area?

**Mr. Waldegrave:** The object of the payments is to ensure that enough people join the scheme to make it work, so there has be to be an incentive element in it. The previous schemes were all based on compulsion, so yes, there should be an incentive to enable people to join voluntarily. Up and down the country, we have found that those who join voluntarily put far more into the schemes than those who are compelled.

### Live Animal Exports

5. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the latest estimate of the number of live animals exported from the United Kingdom each year. [20939]

**Mrs. Browning:** Export trends vary by species. The latest figures from the Meat and Livestock Commission showed that exports of calves fell in the last quarter of last year compared with the same period of 1993 and the figures for sheep indicate a sharper drop.

**Mr. Townsend:** First, I deplore the outrageous letter bomb attacks on my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and on my right hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King). Does my hon. Friend agree that a possible result of port-side mobs will be longer journeys for animals, and thus greater suffering, as well as the destruction of a legitimate livelihood for many farmers?

**Mrs. Browning:** I am sure that my hon. Friend reflects the feelings of the whole House in deploring violence and terrorism in making a political point when in a democracy we have other, more suitable methods. With regard to the effect of demonstrations on animal welfare, my hon. Friend will know that officials from the Ministry and from trading standards departments would always ensure that if the welfare of animals at the point of departure had been so disrupted that it was felt necessary that they should not continue the journey, the necessary steps would be taken to ensure that the welfare of those animals was protected. My hon. Friend is quite right that windscreens being broken and lots of noise from thumping on the lorries cannot be in the interests of animal welfare.

### Common Agricultural Policy

6. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to seek changes in the common agricultural policy; and if he will make a statement. [20940]

**Mr. Waldegrave:** I will continue to press for improvements to the common agricultural policy at every suitable opportunity.

**Mr. Canavan:** Does the Minister agree with the Chief Secretary to the Treasury that the common agricultural policy costs the average family in this country £28 per week? Is it not about time the Government took firmer action to scrap that policy, which is costing the taxpayer billions of pounds a year and leading to mountains of food going to waste and, last year alone, to more than £300 million being lost in fraud?

**Mr. Waldegrave:** Figures of that kind are extremely difficult to be precise about. Subsequent calculations undertaken by my Department with the full agreement of the Treasury suggest that the sum is much lower—something like £4 a week. The whole basis of the figures is guesstimates about what will happen to world prices because of the dumping of agricultural products, and they are not a very satisfactory way to examine what will happen in future. I am not disagreeing with the hon. Gentleman—we want a far cheaper policy which is much nearer to the market. British farming is quite efficient enough nowadays to compete on the world market, and many aspects of the CAP are now inhibiting the gains in efficiency and proper farming practices. We should like people to be freer and freer to compete.

**Mr. Knapman:** Will my right hon. Friend bear it in mind that on average the United Kingdom has much larger farms than many of our European Community partners, which sometimes means that we have different interests? Will he consider that aspect when he fights for British agriculture?

**Mr. Waldegrave:** My hon. Friend is right. The history of British food production is entirely different from that in most of continental Europe. We have had a long tradition, going right back to the repeal of the corn laws,

of fundamentally free trade in food, and the 1840s, 1850s and 1860s saw the departure from the land of a large number of people who had worked it. In many countries in Europe, that process has yet to be undertaken and there is a completely different land-holding structure as a result. My hon. Friend is right to say that we often find ourselves defending somewhat different interests from the rest of Europe.

**Mr. Enright:** Is the Minister aware of the fact that during a recent visit of the Select Committee on European Legislation the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) announced to a bemused Brussels audience that he did not want the CAP to be changed because it did too well for British farmers? Does the Minister share that view?

**Mr. Waldegrave:** Notwithstanding my hon. Friend's important comments, the Government's position is that we want a policy which is cheaper for the consumer, which allows greater freedom to farmers not to have their business dictated by quotas and controls and which is cheaper for the taxpayer, too. I also believe that in such a world, if we can bring down agricultural subsidies in north America at the same time, British farming will do very well.

### Environmental Programmes

7. **Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress has been made with his Department's environmental programmes. [20942]

**Mr. Waldegrave:** My Department is making excellent progress on a number of environmental initiatives. We have recently added a new moorland scheme to the existing range of agri-environment schemes. We have also made significant progress in attaching environmental conditions to the common agricultural policy and in linking agri-environment and forestry schemes with set-aside.

**Mr. Greenway:** My right hon. Friend will appreciate that, with no environmentally sensitive area in the North York Moors national park, the introduction of the moorland scheme will greatly help farmers and landowners there to conserve the much-valued heather and grouse moorland. Does not this initiative show that, while others talk of fancy ideas for conservation, it is the Government who are doing something practical? Will my right hon. Friend ensure that environmental schemes continue to be based on good science and proper and adequate compensation for loss of farm income?

**Mr. Waldegrave:** I can certainly give my hon. Friend the assurance that he seeks. It is perfectly true that the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, for example, and others have been, are and will remain strong supporters of these schemes. After all, the moorlands and uplands of England contain the only bird species that is entirely unique to the United Kingdom—the grouse—so it is a good idea to conserve them.

**Mr. Foulkes:** Is not the Minister's policy on the environment undermined by the privatised electricity companies retaining compulsory powers that they had when they were publicly owned, enabling them to string pylons across the countryside, which is cheaper than undergrounding, and to pay farmers peanuts in compensation for putting those unsightly pylons on their land?

**Mr. Waldegrave:** I well remember the last great wave of pylon building, which happened during a period of Labour government. Very few of those great cables were put underground because of the expense involved. Nevertheless, individual schemes—I know that there is a controversial one, to which I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is referring—will be looked at extremely carefully.

**Mr. Marland:** Is my right hon. Friend in a position to tell the House a little more about his plans for putting trees on set-aside land? It is an excellent idea, on which he was active in European forums, and it is a much more constructive use of agricultural land than leaving it fallow.

**Mr. Waldegrave:** I have made it one of my objectives, and we are making progress with it. The specialist committee examining the proposals has ironed out all the technical problems which remained. We now have to get the proposals through the Council of Ministers, and I have every confidence that we shall. It is a far better use of set-aside land than simply growing weeds.

### Drinks (Dental Health Warnings)

8. **Mrs. Anne Campbell:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to place dental health warnings on drinks with a high sugar content. [20943]

**Mrs. Browning:** We have no plans to introduce labelling requirements of the type mentioned by the hon. Lady. If sugar is added, it must be mentioned in the ingredients list. Total sugar content may also be mentioned in the nutrition labelling panel.

**Mrs. Campbell:** Is the Minister aware that a typical carton of fruit juice aimed at children as young as four months contains the equivalent of 18 teaspoonfuls of sugar? Does she agree that that is contributing considerably to the deterioration in children's dental health? Does she not think that parents should be warned?

**Mrs. Browning:** I certainly think that parents should be made aware of the dangers of any constituent in food which could have a dangerous effect on the health of anybody, whether young children or adults, if that is accurate. We seek to ensure that labelling is as comprehensive as possible, to inform people and to let them make informed decisions themselves.

If one follows the logic of the hon. Lady's suggestion, what sort of label would one use? Would it say, "Don't feed this to babies"? Would she have a label on dairy products, for instance, saying, "Don't eat this for a certain reason"? Where would one stop? It seems much more sensible to give comprehensive information, to make sure that people make informed choices, and to put warning labels on foods only when that is appropriate—for example, on products containing nuts, to which certain people are allergic. These may have serious health consequences, but people may not notice the nut content mentioned on the label. We therefore ask manufacturers to flag on the label the fact that a product contains nuts.

**Mrs. Ann Winterton:** Does my hon. Friend agree that there is sufficient information on labels at present? On the sugar content of drinks and other foodstuffs and the link with dental caries, does she agree that the best way

forward is to have more parental discipline, with children cleaning their teeth thoroughly morning, noon and night, and less interference by the nanny state? *[Interruption.]*

**Mrs. Browning:** My hon. Friend is exactly right. The new nanny state sits opposite us. Opposition Members jeer at the idea of parents giving their young children sensible advice and help in looking after their dental health. The cleaning of young children's teeth and gums with fluoride toothpaste is part of the programme that the Department of Health has initiated to make sure that we protect young children in a practical and sensible way.

**Mr. Martyn Jones:** Is the Minister aware that in Germany there are dental health warnings on all drinks that are marketed for children, including formula milk feeds? Why cannot we have similar warning labels to prevent the increasing scourge of infant tooth decay in this country?

**Mrs. Browning:** Because this is not Germany. I admire the hon. Gentleman's last-ditch attempt to debate with me the rights and wrongs of infant formulae. He has had a full debate on the matter, and he has participated in an Adjournment debate, but he has not convinced me yet.

**Mr. Jenkin:** I assure my hon. Friend that the vast majority of parents in this country are probably already aware that sugar has a detrimental effect on teeth, and do not need a dental health label imposed by a regulating Labour Government to tell them so. My hon. Friend's reference to nuts was entirely appropriate in the context of that proposal, which shows that, for all the ditching of clause IV, the Labour party has lost none of its interfering, nannying attitudes.

**Mrs. Browning:** My hon. Friend has summed up not only the Opposition's approach to the common sense of the British public but their indictment of the food industry in general. I agree that this is not a nanny state, and that so long as people receive the right information and can access it they are quite able to make the right decisions for themselves.

### Renewable Energy Crops

9. **Mr. Soley:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what studies his Department has carried out on crops that can be grown for renewable energy purposes. [20944]

**Mr. Jack:** The Department is currently funding research on short rotation coppice, miscanthus and bio-diesel.

**Mr. Soley:** Perhaps the Minister could begin by taking the 50 per cent. tax off bio-diesel, thus getting a good headline on tax, for a change. Even more importantly, will the Ministry try to liaise better with the Department of Trade and Industry on coppicing so that renewable energy sources, which dramatically reduce levels of carbon dioxide and sulphur dioxide, can be produced?

**Mr. Jack:** As no product called bio-diesel, as such, is commercially available, it would be difficult to take a tax off it. It is typical of the Labour party's approach to invent a tax and then challenge the Government about what they intend to do about it. We are working closely with the DTI on coppicing, and the hon. Gentleman will know that we, with Sweden, are leaders within Europe in that respect. As for the so-called non-fossil fuel obligation—NFFO 3—three projects on short rotational coppice have now been approved. We are pleased about that because if the projects prove viable they will require the use of 9,000 hectares of land to produce the wood.

**Sir David Steel:** With reference to the earlier question about growing trees on set-aside land, have the Government been following the Swedish experience of growing short-life willow trees and using them to fuel power stations? Have the Government yet reached any conclusion about the viability of that?

**Mr. Jack:** I hope that I do not do the right hon. Gentleman an injustice, but when I was talking about short rotational coppice, I meant willow trees. As I said, 9,000 hectares of land would need to be farmed if the three projects technically approved under the NFFO 3 tranche of alternative energy sources come to fruition. If the promoters achieve financial viability, the opportunity to unlock the potential of the land using willow will be there.

### Medical Aspects of Food Policy

10. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what new policies his Department has adopted following the last report by the Committee on Medical Aspects of Food Policy. [20945]

**Mrs. Browning:** The report does not require any major adaptations to existing policies, but we shall take account of it as necessary.

**Mr. Cohen:** Are not the Government treating that important committee report like an old limp chip—left in the wrapping, thrown in the bin and forgotten about—when the dietary health problems remain? Britain has one of the highest levels of heart disease among comparable western nations, and we also have a higher rate of premature death in both men and women. Dietary causes are among the reasons. Should not the Government take real action by giving a much higher profile to dietary health education and forcing food producers to put less fat and salt in their products?

**Mrs. Browning:** The hon. Gentleman is such a dear old-fashioned thing. If he kept up to date with what is going on, he could not help noticing that the Government have produced "The Health of the Nation" White Paper, which not only comprehensively analyses what has happened, especially with regard to heart disease and fat intake in diet, but has set measurable targets. The food industry has been most helpful in trying to meet the targets. I do not know why all that has bypassed the hon. Gentleman, but that is what has actually been happening.

**Sir Jerry Wiggin:** In view of my hon. Friend the Minister's robust reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin)—in which she rightly let us know that the Government are not seeking to interfere with the dietary requirements of individuals—would it not be better to consign the report to the bin, since mass caterers unfortunately tend to read it, unlike the rest of the population who carry on regardless?

**Mrs. Browning:** Any member of the Government or the Opposition telling individuals what they should and should not eat is not the best way to influence them. We welcome the committee's report on nutritional aspects of cardiovascular disease as it provides a useful review of

the science, and also suggests guidelines for dietary advice. People who are providing food for their families and themselves must take those decisions for themselves.

### Live Animal Exports

11. **Mr. Luff:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what consideration he has given to the second report of the Welsh Affairs Committee on the export of live animals; and if he will make a statement. [20946]

**Mrs. Browning:** I welcome the Committee's thoughtful report, which rightly reflects the importance of a Community-wide agreement on animal welfare issues.

**Mr. Luff:** Does my hon. Friend recall the informative and persuasive evidence that she gave to the Committee on 8 March? Does she agree that the report clearly demonstrates the folly of giving in to anti-democratic forces, banning a legal trade, prejudicing the livelihoods of Welsh and other British farmers and—by destroying our influence in the debate in Europe—reducing, if not halting, progress towards an overall improvement in animal welfare standards?

**Mrs. Browning:** I hope that my hon. Friend will understand when I say that it would not be appropriate for me to comment in detail today on that excellent report as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales will wish to comment in the usual way. We appreciate not only the Committee's report, but the support of others in recognising the need for a Europe-wide agreement on animal welfare, and on transport in particular. My right hon. Friend the Minister has worked tirelessly in seeking such an agreement. I am sure that hon. Members on both sides of the House will wish him well in his further negotiations at European Council meetings. This is the way forward in the protection of animals as we attempt to ensure that animal transport is of the highest possible quality.

**Dr. Strang:** Does the hon. Lady acknowledge that the Welsh Affairs Committee did not have the opportunity to see the recently published legal opinion from Gerald Barling QC, which was commissioned by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and the International Fund for Animal Welfare? Since that opinion makes it clear that the Government can legally halt the export of calves to the continent, will Ministers stop using the European Union as an alibi and act to end the trade? How can it be right to export our calves into a system on the continent which is banned in this country on the ground of cruelty?

**Mrs. Browning:** My right hon. Friend the Minister has gone to great pains to study the legal advice in the Barling recommendations. We shall, of course, give our official response to that when lawyers have had a chance to look at it in more detail, and they are doing that at the moment. If the hon. Gentleman is telling the House today that the Labour party has accepted the Barling report, we would be interested to know how he has arrived at that assessment. It suggests that the hon. Gentleman is prepared to accept legal advice from a third party. If he had the responsibility, however, he would know only too well that that legal advice does not stand up.

### Fruit and Vegetable Regime

12. **Sir Michael Neubert:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what efforts he is making to seek a wholesale review of the current European Union fruit and vegetable regime. [20947]

**Mr. Jack:** The Agriculture Council discussed the Commission's "reflections" documents last October and we are pressing for firm proposals to be submitted quickly.

**Sir Michael Neubert:** What action is my hon. Friend taking to ensure that the outcome of any such review will improve the competitive position of United Kingdom fruit and vegetable growers in Europe, particularly the growers of that peerless fruit the English apple, who are threatened by structural over-supply in Europe?

**Mr. Jack:** We have argued effectively for the complete dismantling of the so-called withdrawals mechanism, which is a waste of £500 million in Europe and causes over-production of apples, cauliflowers, tomatoes and other products where there is no clear market. For our part, we have assisted through various grants under the marketing development scheme. We also fought for the grubbing-up scheme to allow our apple industry to be restructured into a more competitive fighting force, to enable our apples to triumph on the supermarket shelves of this country.

### Milk Quotas

13. **Mr. Peter Atkinson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to ensure that European Community milk quota rules are changed to allow trading in quotas across member states' frontiers. [20948]

**Mr. Waldegrave:** We proposed the transferability of milk quotas between member states during the debate on common agricultural policy simplification, in last year's CAP price-fixing negotiations and in Council earlier this year, when I advocated transnational quota leasing. The European Court of Auditors made a similar recommendation two years ago, but there is, at present, no support for our ideas in the Council of Ministers.

**Mr. Atkinson:** Will my right hon. Friend keep on trying—it is essential for British dairy farmers and the dairy industry that he does so? Does he agree that it is wrong that farmers in member states who cannot use their quota should keep them, while farmers in this country are crying out for more?

**Mr. Waldegrave:** I strongly agree with the implication behind my hon. Friend's question. It would make an inherently unsatisfactory system slightly better if areas within the European Community where it is natural to produce milk were able to obtain quota from other areas. Many other countries, however—especially the remaining countries with socialist Governments—administer their quota because they like the centralised power that it gives their governmental organisation.

**Dr. Strang:** Will the right hon. Gentleman recognise that milk quotas, combined with the deregulation of the milk industry that the Government brought into operation on 1 November, are giving us the worst of all worlds, with milk being poured down the drain when we do not

produce enough to meet our own needs, with hundreds of jobs being lost in our dairy plants and with the doorstep delivery system under threat? When will the Minister address those issues?

**Mr. Waldegrave:** The hon. Gentleman is plainly pulling the House's leg. He understands these issues and he knows well enough that the doorstep delivery service has been in decline for 30 years or more. Furthermore, he will remember that when he was an Agriculture Minister the Treasury would not let him devalue the green pound at home, as a result of which British dairy farmers' prices were lower than anywhere else in the European Community. When 1981 was taken as the base year for quotas, we were systemically worse off than other countries in Europe. His party, although not the hon. Gentleman as I am sure he argued against the Treasury, bears a considerable share of the responsibility for the level of our quotas.

### Fishing Offences

14. **Mr. Harris:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many successful prosecutions for fishing offences have been sustained in the past three years; and how many of these were against (a) Spanish and (b) Anglo-Spanish vessels. [20949]

**Mr. Jack:** In the last three years, 171, 182 and 135 vessels have been prosecuted, of which three, four and five respectively were Spanish registered and 16, 11 and 10 were United Kingdom registered landing into Spain.

**Mr. Harris:** I thank my hon. Friend for those figures. How on earth will we ensure effective policing from 1 January next year, when 40 Spanish vessels will be allowed into the waters of the Irish box? Will he give this House and, more particularly, the fishermen of the south-west of England an absolute assurance that we shall do everything in our power to ensure proper enforcement and that the Spanish do not get away with breaking all the rules in the book, which is what they have been doing until now?

**Mr. Jack:** My hon. Friend, who represents the fishing interests in his constituency with distinction, is right to make those points. Once the June Fisheries Council has agreed the final terms of the enforcement regime associated with the changed arrangements in western waters, we will carefully ensure that our resources are adequate for the job. As a result of keeping the Spanish out of the Irish sea and the Bristol channel, only one tenth of the portion of the Irish box that remains will be British territorial waters for the purposes of fishery protection. The remaining nine tenths will be policed by the Irish Republic and I can assure my hon. Friend that I will be in close contact with my opposite number in the Republic about joint arrangements to ensure full and effective enforcement.

**Mrs. Ewing:** I listened with interest to the statistics that the Minister gave, but will he tell us by whom the prosecutions were brought?

**Mr. Jack:** The prosecutions, when the coastal state involved was the United Kingdom, were brought by the United Kingdom Government.

**Mr. John Townend:** What influence does the Foreign Office have on the enthusiasm and the frequency with which we enforce fishing regulations on the Spanish fleet? Does the Minister understand why British fishermen are perturbed—they will be even more perturbed when they read in *Hansard* the figures that he gave today—that we have arrested many fewer Spanish vessels than the Irish? Even if we accept that their waters are greater, it shows that we have not been as enthusiastic as we should have been.

**Mr. Jack:** I assure my hon. Friend that I have received no representations from my colleagues in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to take it easy on enforcement. My hon. Friend may not have noticed that, during the Easter recess, the Spanish-registered vessel Chimbote was the subject of vigorous prosecution and its master had to pay some £34,000 in fines. My hon. Friend may have gained the impression that we are less enthusiastic than the Irish Republic on enforcement, but the bulk of the Spanish fleet fishes to the west of Ireland in Irish territorial waters, which restricts our opportunity to inspect. I assure him, however, that we make 5,000 inspections a year and, wherever we find vessels of any European Union member state breaking the rules, we unstintingly prosecute.

**Rev. Martin Smyth:** The Minister will be aware that fishermen claim that they have not been properly policed. How far does the Minister expect the new satellite system to help, and where will it work in the first instance?

**Mr. Jack:** The hon. Gentleman is right to refer to the trials that are now taking place throughout the European Union in the use of satellites to monitor the location of fishing vessels. If proven technically correct, satellite systems can deal with the location of fishing vessels but cannot identify what vessels are doing or their minimum fish or net sizes. Those matters still require the intervention of the coastal state to make on-board inspections. As I said a moment ago to my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) in the context of western waters, we shall ensure that our resources are man enough for the job.

*Following is the information:*

*The numbers of fishing vessels successfully prosecuted in the United Kingdom in the last three years were:*

| | *1992* | *1993* | *1994* |
|---|---|---|---|
| All vessels | 171 | 182 | 135 |
| Spanish registered vessels | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| UK registered vessels landing into Spain | 16 | 11 | 10 |

### Bramley Apples

15. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what contributions he has made to the efforts being made to boost the prospects for increased sales of Bramley apples. [20950]

**Mr. Jack:** I was delighted to help launch the Bramley apple campaign last season. My right hon. Friend and my ministerial colleagues and I take every opportunity to promote Bramleys and all home-grown produce.

**Mr. Thompson:** Does my hon. Friend realise that there is nothing more delicious than a baked Bramley apple covered in cream? Will he undertake a tour of the apple orchards—indeed, the gardens—of East Anglia, where he will find many excellent Bramley apple trees? Is not the British apple the best, and is not the Bramley the best

British apple? Is he doing all that he can to encourage research and marketing opportunities to ensure that we sell as many, if not more, Bramley apples abroad as we do at home?

**Mr. Jack:** My hon. Friend gives me an irresistible invitation to canter through the orchards of East Anglia to see the Bramley apples and I should be happy to undertake such a visit with him at the start of the season. I assure him that we shall continue to do all that we can to promote the Bramley apple. Under the marketing and development scheme, we have already given some £150,000 to enable a significant marriage between east Kent packers and home-grown fruits. That newly consummated enterprise will enable our Bramley apples to be even better marketed in the forthcoming season.

**Mr. John D. Taylor:** As one of the main production areas of Bramley apples in the United Kingdom is County Armagh in Northern Ireland—I declare a personal interest in that respect—will the Minister confirm that any scheme to promote the sale and enjoyment of the Bramley apple will extend to the entire United Kingdom?

**Mr. Jack:** The right hon Gentleman is right. We try hard to ensure that all sections of the United Kingdom's apple-producing industry receive help with marketing. In that respect, I assure him that we are in apple pie order.

### Veal Crates

16. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress he has made in getting the Commission to bring forward its review of the use of veal crates. [20952]

**Mrs. Browning:** My right hon. Friend the Minister has secured the Commission's agreement to bring forward this year, instead of in 1997, its report, which will trigger the Council's review of the directive on the welfare of calves.

**Mr. Greenway:** Does my hon. Friend agree that a new victory in Europe is needed in the form of a total and final ban on veal crates? Will she accept my congratulations on the fact that the Government have achieved a partial victory in bringing forward the date for consideration of the future of the veal crate from 1997 to this year? Will she go all out for a total ban on that disgraceful and unacceptable form of veal production?

**Mrs. Browning:** Yes, indeed, that is why we are seeking a total ban throughout the European Community on calves raised in crates, which are deprived of roughage and iron. We want calves to be raised in a much more welfare-friendly way, as indeed they are in this country. Yet again Britain leads the way in Europe and as soon as the rest bring their standards up to ours, the better.

### Live Animal Exports

17. **Mr. Fishburn:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to ensure that the legal trade in live animal exports is able to continue when the specified welfare standards are met. [20953]

**Mrs. Browning:** The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food sets statutory requirements to protect the welfare of animals in transit, which provide a framework within which livestock hauliers may lawfully carry out their trade.

**Mr. Fishburn:** Does my hon. Friend agree that, in the history of Britain, those who have inveighed against free trade have invariably allied themselves with the illiberal and the intolerant? Is not that true of those who call for a unilateral ban on the free trade of livestock?

**Mrs. Browning:** Indeed. Anyone who is seriously concerned about the welfare of animals will recognise the greater prize of improving standards of animal welfare throughout the Community and will not just pull up the drawbridge, saying, "We are all right; never mind about the welfare of animals on the other side of the channel."

## PRIME MINISTER

### Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 4 May. [20962]

**The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major):** This morning, I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

**Mr. Canavan:** In view of renewed speculation that the Thatcher dynasty might emulate the Churchill dynasty by winning the lottery jackpot, will the Prime Minister set an example by ensuring free access to all his prime ministerial papers before they, along with him, are very soon consigned to the dustbin of history?

**The Prime Minister:** I agreed in 1991 that I shall remove from my office, in due course, only papers of a truly personal nature and no official material, other than that which, like speeches, is already in the public domain. I hope that my successors will follow that convention.

Q2. **Mr. Whittingdale:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 4 May. [20963]

**The Prime Minister:** I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Whittingdale:** Is my right hon. Friend aware that his visit yesterday to meet the victims of the IRA's continued brutality will be widely welcomed? Does he agree that Sinn Fein's protestations to be a democratic, political party ring hollow while it continues to orchestrate and to defend vicious attacks on the police and civilians?

**The Prime Minister:** Sinn Fein's mask slipped yesterday and it reminded us vividly of its character. As a result, I shall consider over the weekend whether the exploratory dialogue can go ahead. I shall probably decide that it should do so, because I wish Sinn Fein to become a fully democratic and peaceful party, playing a full part in negotiations with other parties. The purpose of the exploratory dialogue is to help to bring that about. As we have come this far, the wider interests of the people of Northern Ireland should not be abandoned without holding Sinn Fein's feet to the fire in face-to-face negotiations.

**Mr. Blair:** May I say that I associate myself entirely with those remarks?

On Tuesday, the Prime Minister said that the Chancellor of the Exchequer had conducted a review over many months into the taxation of insurance payments and had removed any uncertainty. Today, the Chancellor has popped up and announced a new and different review into part of the same problem. Why did not the Prime Minister tell us about that other review on Tuesday?

**The Prime Minister:** I am afraid that the right hon. Gentleman is slightly confused and is again seeking to spread a little despondency. I shall try to explain it for him carefully, so that he is able to remove any misunderstanding.

There is no new intention to levy taxes on the payments from certain insurance policies. The question that has been asked by the insurance companies is whether those payments are already taxable under existing tax laws, which date back to the last century. The insurance industry has asked the Inland Revenue to give its opinions about that.

The Inland Revenue receives similar questions from the insurance industry and other industries routinely, week after week. When the Inland Revenue has concluded its consideration of that issue, it will report to Ministers—not, of course, before it is ready to do so. When we have its opinion, we can consider whether the law needs changing.

Before the right hon. Gentleman spreads any more misunderstandings, let me say to him that there is no record of any tax ever having been deducted from those insurance payments and, until the matter is settled for those policies under review, the Inland Revenue will not expect tax to be deducted.

So that the right hon. Gentleman cannot accuse me of leaving out any information, let me say to the House that there is one real threat to people with private insurance. Let me quote:

"We can close tax reliefs that are unfair, like reforming those for . . . private medical insurance"—

the words of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), the shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer.

**Mr. Blair:** The right hon. Gentleman has not told us why he did not mention that review on Tuesday. How does what he has just said square with the fact that yesterday the Inland Revenue said that insurance payments other than those relating to mortgages were to be taxed and never mentioned any review, and why did the Chancellor say on Tuesday that it was a simple problem, that he had sorted it out in 10 minutes and that he had not even heard of the first review, never mind the second one?

This has been not a review but a pre-election panic attack, and it bears all the hallmarks of the right hon. Gentleman's Government—it begins in incompetence, falls into confusion and ends in chaos.

**The Prime Minister:** We were carefully weaved round to the preordained soundbite again. I have great respect for the right hon. Gentleman, and I know that he is not nearly as silly as he sought to make out in what he just said.

The right hon. Gentleman knows very well that such routine inquiries are made of the Inland Revenue by industry and industry spokesmen all the time. They are answered by the Inland Revenue. There are huge numbers of them. They are not all referred to Ministers. Sometimes, when they are made public, the right hon. Gentleman tries to make a great scandal about them.

The right hon. Gentleman knows well that there is nothing in this today and there was nothing in it on Tuesday. All he is about is the usual Labour party scaremongering for cheap political gain.

**Sir Giles Shaw:** May I return my right hon. Friend to more relevant matters? I add my congratulations to many on the skill and courage that he showed in persisting with his programme in Londonderry yesterday.

In relation to the magnanimous gesture that my right hon. Friend has just made in respect of discussions and preliminary talks, will he please ensure that any discussions or talks are not conducted under any form of duress and that, when such talks start, item one on day one in the first hour will be that of somehow getting rid of arms, which continue to overshadow the prospects of Northern Ireland with the threat of violence?

**The Prime Minister:** My hon. Friend is, of course, quite right that there can be no suggestion of discussing those matters with Sinn Fein in the exploratory talks under duress.

Let me also say to my hon. Friend that I have no illusions about the nature of Sinn Fein or its spokesmen. The behaviour of a few hundred of its supporters yesterday showed how far it has yet to go before it becomes a democratic party, as the rest of us in the House understand the meaning of the term, "democratic party".

In two hours yesterday, those supporters destroyed the image that Sinn Fein has sought to build up in recent months, and the event reminds us of the nature of the people with whom we are dealing. We want to push them towards democracy. We know that it will be a tough job, but we will continue to try because it is in the wider interests of the people of Northern Ireland that we should do so.

Q3. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 4 May. [20964]

**The Prime Minister:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Jones:** Will the Prime Minister finally confirm that he misled the House on 25 April when he said, in a reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths), that the information that there were two bureaucratic staff for every three teachers was in "Social Trends"? It is not; it is in the *Annual Abstract of Statistics*, which goes on to say that the so-called bureaucratic staff are cleaners, catering staff and nursery assistants. Will the Prime Minister now tell the House that?

**The Prime Minister:** The source of the figures is even more appropriate than the hon. Gentleman suggests: the Local Government Management Board collected them.

What I said to the House was wrong in one respect. I said that local education authorities employed two non-teaching members of staff to every three teachers. In fact, it is not two against three but two and a half against three.

**Sir Timothy Sainsbury:** Having studied the report of yesterday's debates—as I am sure he has—my right hon. Friend will have been reminded of the magnificent performance of our exporters, especially our industrial exporters. Does he agree that a number of Government policies have contributed to that success, not least privatisation, the reform of industrial relations, a sensible

taxation system and inward investment, and that all those developments are threatened by the Labour party's policies?

**The Prime Minister:** There is no doubt about the remarkable performance of British exporters, including industrial exporters and exporters of services. They would undoubtedly be put at risk by many of the policies proposed by Labour, and the extra costs that those policies would impose on employers. Exports have successively reached a new record in about nine of the past 12 or 13 months. I cannot recall an occasion when that has happened before.

I should have thought that, instead of carping, Labour Members might for once give some credit to British industry and British exporters.

Q4. **Mr. Robert Ainsworth:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 4 May. [20965]

**The Prime Minister:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Ainsworth:** Is the Prime Minister aware of the concern and even fear among disabled people about the Government's proposed new tests for incapacity benefit? Does he accept that that concern is genuine, and will he dissociate himself from the disgraceful comments of the Secretary of State for Social Security, who attempted to brand all those people fraudsters?

**The Prime Minister:** My right hon. Friend did no such thing. He has taken a great deal of action to help disabled people, as has my hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People. We are as concerned about disabled people's security of mind, and the provision of services for them, as any other party in the country. The Disability Discrimination Bill, which has passed through the House of Commons and is currently passing through the House of Lords, will be the biggest single advance for disabled people that we have seen in this country for many years.

As for the new incapacity benefit, I hope that—as the Labour party sometimes claims also to be concerned about the size of the social security bill—the hon. Gentleman will agree that it would be indefensible to continue to pay incapacity benefits to people who are not genuinely incapable of work. Either the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends agree with that, or they do not. If they do, they have no cause to criticise the Government; if they do not, they had better stop giving us lectures about public expenditure, and admit to the increased taxation that they would have to impose.

**Mr. Garnier:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that air service agreements between the United States and the United Kingdom are a matter for the United States Government and his Government and are nothing whatever to do with the European Commission?

**The Prime Minister:** Yes, I agree with that point and we have made our views entirely clear in that regard.

Q5. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 4 May. [20966]

**The Prime Minister:** I refer the hon. and learned Gentleman to the reply I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Janner:** Does the Prime Minister accept that desperately ill people and their families feel agony and anguish when they cannot gain immediate admission to local hospitals? My constituent, Lilian May Wilkinson, alas, died as a result of that situation. Does the Prime Minister understand that that is one of the many reasons why today people in the city of Leicester are pouring out to obliterate the Tories from our city?

**The Prime Minister:** I should have thought that if the hon. and learned Gentleman wanted a detailed reply to the difficulties that have caused the tragedy to which he referred he might have given some prior notice of the case before using it in that fashion. He knows that the overwhelming majority of people get a better service from those who work in the health service than they would find anywhere else in the world. Errors do take place in a service that size. People are human; even those who work in the health service can make mistakes.

However, I think that the hon. and learned Gentleman would have done better to remind people that once every 16 seconds an ambulance makes an emergency call, that once every nine seconds a surgeon performs a national health service operation, that every tenth of a second someone somewhere visits his or her general practitioner and that 8 million people are treated each year. Why does the hon. and learned Gentleman choose one issue, of which he gave no notice, in order to try to make that sort of political point?

**Mr. Trimble:** I assure the Prime Minister that there is one party in this place which will not allow itself to be subjected to duress. I refer again to yesterday's incident which marred the Prime Minister's visit to Londonderry. Does he realise that the incident was not unprecedented? While it was of a slightly greater intensity than others, that sort of street demonstration has occurred regularly in the past few months and it is part of an IRA-Sinn Fein campaign to undermine the Royal Ulster Constabulary—a campaign which is assisted by other elements, some of whom are within the House. Therefore, will the Prime Minister give an assurance that those members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary who have protected society from terrorism for the past 25 years have his wholehearted support and that there is no question of disbanding or restructuring the Royal Ulster Constabulary?

**The Prime Minister:** I made clear in the speech that I gave yesterday in Northern Ireland my admiration for the work that the Royal Ulster Constabulary has done, not just yesterday—when I think that its members performed superbly—but over the past 25 years in seeing the people of Northern Ireland through a most difficult period in their history. The Royal Ulster Constabulary has a very proud record and I am happy to endorse it for the hon. Gentleman this afternoon.

I said earlier that I have no illusions about the people with whom we are dealing. I say again that peaceful democratic parties do not act in the way that Sinn Fein supporters acted yesterday. They do not act as front organisations for heavily armed paramilitaries; they do not intimidate and threaten the population; they do not break the legs of teenagers with baseball bats, as they have been doing; and they do not behave in many other thuggish ways. Of course I welcome the end of killing in Northern Ireland. However, as I said clearly yesterday and will say again and again, much of the brutal behaviour by paramilitaries must be stopped before they can begin to claim that they are democratic parties.

## Business of the House

3.32 pm

**Mr. Jeff Rooker** (Birmingham, Perry Barr): Will the Leader of the House give us the business for the next two weeks?

**The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton):** The business for next week will be as follows:

TUESDAY 9 MAY—Debate on British policy towards the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

WEDNESDAY 10 MAY—Until 2.30 pm, there will be debates on the motion for the Adjournment of the House.

Opposition Day (11th allotted day). There will be a debate on the national health service in London on an Opposition motion.

THURSDAY 11 MAY—Debate on the second report of the Social Security Committee on the Church Commissioners and Church of England pensions on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

FRIDAY 12 MAY—The House will not be sitting.

The House will also wish to know that European Standing Committee B will meet on Wednesday 10 May at 10.30 am to consider European Community document No. 10589/94, European Community document No. 4674/95 and the unnumbered explanatory memorandum submitted by the Department of Trade and Industry on 28 April 1995 relating to telecommunications.

*[Wednesday 10 May:*

*European Standing Committee B—Relevant European Community documents: 10589/94, 4674/95, unnumbered; relevant report of the European Legislation Committee: HC 70-ix (1994-95) and HC 70-xiv (1994-95).]*

The following week, business will be as follows:

MONDAY 15 MAY—Progress on remaining stages of the Gas Bill.

Motions on the Conditional Fee Agreements Order and the Conditional Fee Agreements Regulations.

I anticipate concluding the remaining stages of the Gas Bill on either Tuesday or Wednesday, and propose that on Thursday 18 May there should be a debate on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

**Mr. Rooker:** I thank the Leader of the House for reverting to using his best endeavours to announce, as far as practicable, two complete weeks of business. May I raise three points relating to next week?

I understand from press reports some weeks ago that some time next week the committee headed by Lord Nolan will present its interim report to the Prime Minister. Although the committee reports to the Prime Minister, it is in effect a report to Parliament and people about Members of Parliament and their interests in quangos. Therefore, we expect and request early publication and not to have to wait for the Prime Minister to think about it and delay publication until the Government have decided what they are going to recommend or not, as the case may be. We do not want a knee-jerk response. All political parties will be affected and there will be collateral damage all round. We also expect reasonable time to be allocated for a debate a couple of weeks after publication of the report.

Secondly, will the Leader of the House ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer or the Secretary of State for Social Security—whoever he considers most relevant—to make a statement to the House next week about the tax and social security implications for the 460 victims of thalidomide of the decision reached yesterday by Guinness plc to pump extra money into the Thalidomide Trust in the next 15 years? That is welcome in so far as it goes, but it is quite unacceptable that the issue appears to be dealt with in a piecemeal fashion. It affects a small group of our fellow citizens who were not expected to live this long. Many of them are heads of their own families now. Parliament really should be able to address the matter and we could do so better if we had a statement from the relevant Minister about the implications of yesterday's decision.

My final point relates to a point that may turn up on business next week, but if it is scheduled for after 10 o'clock it may be taken on the nod. Since 12 April, the Home Secretary has had on his desk the report of the English parliamentary boundary commission. Given that that report recommends five extra constituencies for England and that we have already approved the Welsh report, which creates two extra constituencies, and the report of the boundary commission for Northern Ireland, which increases the number of constituencies from 17 to 18, after the next election there will be eight extra Members of Parliament.

It would be quite unacceptable and the public would go ape if we were to increase the size of the House—which some think is too great already—without debating the issue. In the normal course of events, it would be taken "forthwith" after 10 o'clock. It would be lamentable for the House not to debate a fairly substantial increase in the size of the House.

**Mr. Newton:** I shall take those points in reverse order. In respect of the boundary commission, I cannot at present give a date when my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary expects to bring the proposals to the House in the way that is expected. I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman is right to suggest that such motions are normally taken "forthwith", but I shall consider carefully with my right hon. and learned Friend what the hon. Gentleman has said.

In respect of tax and social security in relation to thalidomide cases, my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer is due to answer questions on Thursday in the week I have just announced, but I shall draw the hon. Gentleman's request to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security, having had some experience in various previous incarnations of similar problems in relation to the contamination of blood with AIDS and other matters.

The publication of the Nolan report is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and Lord Nolan, but I do not anticipate any prolonged delay in publication and I certainly expect a debate at an early stage.

**Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith** (Wealden): As Chairman of the Select Committee on Members' Interests, I warmly welcome my right hon. Friend's last few words. Interest in standards in public life is not confined to Opposition Members, but we probably have the highest standards of conduct in public life of any nation. The issue is, however, of concern to us all on both sides of the House. I hope that we shall have a debate on the matter as soon as possible.

**Mr. Newton:** I cannot add to what I said, but I note my hon. Friend's support for an early debate.

**Mr. Menzies Campbell** (Fife, North-East): I thank the Leader of the House for announcing a debate on former Yugoslavia next week. His announcement is timely indeed. The right hon. Gentleman will be aware that the annual defence White Paper was published yesterday, notwithstanding the fact that later today there will be a debate on the Royal Air Force. Will the right hon. Gentleman give us an undertaking that the traditional two-day opportunity to debate the defence White Paper will be provided as soon as possible, and especially before the House rises for the summer recess?

**Mr. Newton:** I cannot make off-the-cuff promises on that or any other matter this afternoon. I note, of course, what the hon. and learned Gentleman has said. I think that every debate that I have announced for next week is a response to requests recently made to me either in the House or in the Corridors.

**Sir Patrick Cormack** (Staffordshire, South): May I thank my right hon. Friend for at last giving us a full-day debate on former Yugoslavia? Given the extreme gravity of the situation, which increases almost hourly, will he ascertain whether it is possible for my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, as well as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, to take part in the debate?

**Mr. Newton:** I note my hon. Friend's request. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has other important foreign affairs responsibilities that may take some of his time next week.

**Mr. Alfred Morris** (Manchester, Wythenshawe): The Leader of the House is a respected former Minister with responsibilities for disabled people. He will have heard the exchange earlier today about the comments of the Secretary of State for Social Security yesterday at the Lobby luncheon, in which he clearly and undoubtedly linked social security abuse to occupants of wheelchairs. Is the Leader of the House aware that the reaction of organisations of and for disabled people is one not merely of concern or dismay but of anger and a sense of betrayal? May we have a ministerial statement about what was said at an early date so that the Secretary of State for Social Security can be questioned on the Floor of the House?

**Mr. Newton:** I thought that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister dealt fully and appropriately with that question a few moments ago. I shall not seek to add to his response. I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for his kind remarks about me.

**Mr. Roger Knapman** (Stroud): Will my right hon. Friend use his influence through the usual channels to try to ensure that next Wednesday's debate is about the national health service as a whole rather than the NHS in London? If the service is as bad as the Opposition parties are saying, why are people living longer? Is it because they are eating bran for breakfast?

**Mr. Newton:** It will be for you, Madam Speaker, to determine what speeches are in order. It appears to me at least that it is impossible to debate proposals concerning the NHS in London without taking account of the effect of the relationship between services in London and elsewhere. In the county which I represent in part, we have been conscious for some time that tackling some of the problems in London would be an important ingredient in being able to tackle problems in counties such as Essex.

**Mr. Eddie Loyden** (Liverpool, Garston): May I underline the importance of the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) about thalidomide victims? The Leader of the House may not be aware, but an undertaking was given by a junior Minister in another place that continuing consideration would be given to thalidomide victims through interdepartmental meetings, which is a prerequisite for finally achieving some justice for them. Will he ensure that an early debate takes place, or a statement is made, on this issue? We feel that there is a clear Government responsibility for the thalidomide victims.

**Mr. Newton:** I am sure that the matter will be carefully considered and that any statement that seems appropriate will be made when it seems appropriate. I am conscious of having taken part in similar discussions when payments were made in respect of contaminated blood that went to some haemophiliacs.

**Mr. Richard Tracey** (Surbiton): Following the very successful police operation two days ago against suspected criminals, will my right hon. Friend arrange a debate on the police in prime Government time, in which contrasts would appear between the Government's positive policies towards law and order and the rather vacuous statements of the Opposition parties?

**Mr. Newton:** I have much sympathy with my hon. Friend's latter remarks. I hope that I have demonstrated that I always do my best to respond to requests such as his.

**Mr. Nigel Spearing** (Newham, South): Is the Leader of the House aware that, with regard to health in London, I was able to initiate a debate on Wednesday 26 April on health services in east London, in which I made a number of charges and statements, including the fact that it would be quite in line with Government policy for Bart's hospital to open as a private casualty emergency hospital if it were so funded? Will he ask his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health, who despite requests did not attend that debate, to let me have notes on any inaccuracies in my charges?

**Mr. Newton:** I will certainly pass on that question to my right hon. Friend.

**Lady Olga Maitland** (Sutton and Cheam): Is my right hon. Friend aware of the deep alarm of senior service chiefs at the Labour party's proposal to allow homosexuals into the armed services? Bearing in mind the fact that it is a highly controversial proposal and that it could undermine the important discipline in our fighting forces, will my right hon. Friend set aside prime time to enable all parties to debate such an important issue?

**Mr. Newton:** Again, I cannot make such a promise, but I draw attention to the fruitful use that the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) has evidently made—from his point of view, at least—of opportunities on Wednesday mornings. Beyond that, it is of course a fact that armed forces legislation is necessary every five years. I will not do the mathematics, for fear of it being suggested that I were pre-empting the next Queen's Speech, but the calculations are fairly clear.

**Ms Diane Abbott** (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): Will the Leader of the House make time for a debate on air quality? Is he aware that bad air quality has been forecast for most of Britain for the third day running and that it causes misery to asthma sufferers, especially children? Childhood asthma is a particular problem in my constituency. Given the inadequacy of the Government's policy on such issues, a debate is long overdue.

**Mr. Newton:** Air quality is very much an environmental priority for the Government and that is why we are bringing forward legislation in the Environment Bill in the very near future to implement the proposals that we published in January, which were widely welcomed.

**Mr. David Shaw** (Dover): In relation to the discussion about the possibility of a debate on the Register of Members' Interests, and considering that my right hon. Friend found a couple of hours recently to debate problems involving junior Members of the House, would he find double the time for a debate if senior Members of the Opposition were found to have breached the rules of the register, and would he ensure that every Opposition Member who spoke in the previous debate had the opportunity to speak again?

**Mr. Newton:** I simply have to say again, as I hope that I have demonstrated, that should reports from important Committees of the House require debate, I would expect to provide appropriate time for such debate.

**Mr. Clive Soley** (Hammersmith): May we have a debate on the changing role of Back Benchers, not least of those on the all-party committees and the innovative evidence-taking committees, which have been set up by myself and others? Such committees are widely appreciated outside the House, but they create administrative problems and need to be developed within the structure of the House. Many of us would welcome a proper debate on that subject.

**Mr. Newton:** I think that you, Madam Speaker, would agree, given your chairmanship of the House of Commons Commission, that such matters need to be considered in the first instance by the appropriate Committees.

**Mr. Quentin Davies** (Stamford and Spalding): Will my right hon. Friend find an early opportunity for a debate on the press and media? Many relevant issues have never been properly addressed, such as concentration, privacy, right to reply and so on. Recently, there have been serious cases of financial and sexual entrapment. It is quite clear that certain people in the media feel that they are entitled to use methods such as telephone tapping, purloining of private correspondence, bribery and entrapment, which are normally associated with the secret police in totalitarian societies. There is widespread concern in the country about that trend. May we have an opportunity to explore those issues in a debate on the Floor of the House?

**Mr. Newton:** That is yet another request that I will consider. I must make the point that it is well known that issues of cross-media ownership are under examination at the moment. I cannot predict when a conclusion might be reached and announced. However, it would seem that that might be a more appropriate time for such a debate.

**Mr. Neil Gerrard** (Walthamstow): May I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to early-day motion 1034 and particularly that part of it which deals with the personal safety of members of the Pakistan Bonded Labour Liberation Front?

[*That this House calls on the Government to convey to the Government of Pakistan its profound concern at the killing of Iqbal Masih, aged 12, on Sunday 16th April, to press the Government of Pakistan to conduct a full and impartial investigation into his murder and to bring those responsible to justice and to urge the Government of Pakistan both to safeguard the personal safety of members of the Pakistan Bonded Labour Liberation Front, with whom Iqbal Masih campaigned, and also to promptly and fully implement the provisions of the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act 1992, bringing to an end the continuing and widespread conditions of child servitude and adult debt bondage against which Iqbal Masih had campaigned.*]

The chairman of the Pakistan Bonded Labour Liberation Front is in the United Kingdom at the moment, but will be returning to Pakistan very shortly. There is real concern about the personal safety of leading members of that organisation after the murder of Iqbal Masih. Will the Leader of the House draw this issue to the attention of the Foreign Secretary as I believe that a statement from the Foreign Secretary expressing international concern would be of great value in ensuring the personal safety of members of that organisation?

**Mr. Newton:** I shall of course bring that point to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary. However, I can say that we deplore the murder of Iqbal Masih and hope that the Pakistan authorities will bring to justice those responsible and fully implement the provisions of the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act 1992.

**Mrs. Bridget Prentice** (Lewisham, East): As the Leader of the House has already denied the possibility of a debate on the comments of the Secretary of State for Social Security that wheelchair users may well be fraudsters, is he aware that the national press office of the Department of Social Security has confirmed today—

**Mr. David Shaw:** On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I have heard the comments of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security referred to frequently in the House. I was at that lunch and he did not say what hon. Members are claiming he said.

**Madam Speaker:** That is not a point of order for me. I am not responsible for what Ministers say. They are responsible for their own comments.

**Mrs. Prentice:** Is the Leader of the House aware that, despite the fact that he feels that the words of the Secretary of State for Social Security that some wheelchair users may well be fraudsters because of the invalidity benefit changes—

**Mr. Shaw:** He did not say that at all.

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mrs. Prentice:** Is the Leader of the House aware that the national press office of the Department of Social Security has confirmed today that wheelchair users will be subjected to a work test? Given that information, does he not now

agree with the Opposition that the Secretary of State for Social Security and the Government must at least make a statement? If not, will he offer an opportunity for a debate?

**Mr. Newton:** As I was not present at the lunch, I am particularly grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) for making it absolutely clear that what is being said about my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security is, to use his word, a distortion. On the latter point, I make the point that many people in wheelchairs work, wish to work and are proud to work.

**Mr. Harry Greenway** (Ealing, North): Has my right hon. Friend noted the rare absence from the Chamber of the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) and the frequently repeated absence of all the Liberal Democrat Members? Will my right hon. Friend provide a debate next week on open spaces with a view to examining the policies and practices of the respective parties, notably the Labour party, which claims to favour the retention of open spaces? Ealing's Labour-controlled council is now set to sell off for development Ravenor farm, which has existed for hundreds of years, to the consternation of the people of Ealing and of Greenford in particular.

**Mr. Newton:** I note the twist in the tail of my hon. Friend's question, which was directed, as is so often the case with my hon. Friend, at those in Ealing and I hope that they will heed my hon. Friend. As for the first part of my hon. Friend's question, I assume that he was referring to what he might describe as an improvement in the environment with regard to the absence of certain people. The Environment Bill might provide an appropriate opportunity for my hon. Friend.

**Mr. Derek Enright** (Hemsworth): The Leader of the House will be aware that the political adviser to the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food wrote to several Conservatives, business men as well as Members, asking them to join a Conservative working party on agriculture and agricultural policy for the next election. That is absolutely fine, except that he wrote on Ministry notepaper and arranged to use a Ministry room for the meeting. Will the Leader of the House therefore arrange for somebody to come to the House to make a statement next week on the propriety of the use of Ministry notepaper and Ministry rooms for party political purposes?

**Mr. Newton:** The right course is for me to bring that question to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

**Mrs. Anne Campbell** (Cambridge): May I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to an article in today's *Financial Times*, which reports that although the British people own fewer cars than our continental counterparts, we are forced into making greater use of them for personal and business reasons? That leads to greater congestion on our roads and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott) said, to air pollution, which has reached unacceptable levels, especially during the past few days. Is it not important to make time for a debate on that subject, which affects not only the health of the nation but the business prospects, personal amenities and leisure of many of our citizens?

**Mr. Newton:** I have already referred to that matter and the likely opportunity for a debate in relation to the Environment Bill.

**Mr. Toby Jessel** (Twickenham): As for the debate on the national health service in London next week, can my right hon. Friend confirm that it will be in order to draw the House's attention to the excellent Teddington memorial hospital, which is the smallest national health service trust hospital in the whole country, has 49 general practitioner beds and is a tremendous success—

**Hon. Members:** He was not here.

**Madam Speaker:** Order. I am hearing complaints that the hon. Gentleman was not here for the statement. The hon. Gentleman has been in the Chamber throughout the entire time and that is why I called him. In respect of what he is saying, he might seek to catch my eye next week because he seems to be making a statement. He knows very well that we have a debate next week. Is he asking for a second one?

**Mr. Jessel:** I lost track of what I was saying, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** The hon. Gentleman was extolling the virtues of his local hospital. I thought that he might wait until next week and catch my eye and do that in a five or seven-minute speech.

**Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours** (Workington): The Leader of the House will recall that I have been pressing him to make a statement on the question of the precedence being given by the Select Committee on Members' Interests to a libel action in the courts over and above proceedings in Parliament. Will he be forthcoming and make a statement? This matter is important to Parliament. It is about the very integrity of our institution and many of my hon. Friends want to know what the position should be.

**Mr. Newton:** First, may I thank you, Madam Speaker, for answering the previous question on my behalf and, indeed, if I may say so, answering it so nicely.

Secondly, the hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that decisions about how Select Committees, including the Privileges Committee that I chair myself at the moment, conduct their inquiries, and any interrelationship with legal proceedings, are for those Committees. There would be considerable resentment if I were to stand here and make statements telling them how to go about their work.

**Mr. Jeremy Corbyn** (Islington, North): Will the Leader of the House make time available—I notice that there may possibly be a suitable day the week after next—for a debate on foreign policy so that the relationship between the richer northern countries and the poorer southern countries can be examined and debated? The issue of world poverty should be addressed seriously. It cannot be right that we continue to extract wealth from the poorest countries through debt repayment and trade imbalance and pretend that it is nothing to do with us and that we do not need to do anything about it. Can he promise such a debate?

**Mr. Newton:** I cannot promise a debate, not least because there is already to be what is, in effect, a foreign affairs debate, although I accept that it is on a somewhat different, and more limited, issue from that which the hon. Gentleman raised. I will bear his request in mind. He might have acknowledged that this country has been among the leaders in the western world in easing the debt burden and debt repayment requirements.

**Mr. Harry Cohen** (Leyton): I welcome next week's debate on the national health service in London, which has been initiated by the parliamentary Labour party, because it will give us the opportunity to point out that hospital waiting lists have gone up by 15 per cent. in the past nine months in my area of Redbridge and Waltham Forest and reached a record 180,000 in London as a whole. However, why are such debates always at the behest of the parliamentary Labour party, never in the Government's time? Is it because, in Baroness Thatcher's famous words, the Government are frit?

**Mr. Newton:** No doubt the hon. Gentleman is another who will be seeking to catch your eye next week, Madam Speaker; perhaps he will speak even more briefly than my hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Mr. Jessel). However, the hon. Gentleman does not have a good argument. NHS legislation is currently before Parliament, so to suggest that the Government have not provided time to debate the health service is ridiculous.

**Mr. John Denham** (Southampton, Itchen): Will the Leader of the House endeavour to persuade the Secretary of State for Transport to make a statement on the privatisation of British Rail Maintenance Ltd. in Eastleigh? I recently discovered that the deal nearly came unstuck because ABB had the right to claim 60 per cent. of the work allocated to BRML. As we are now told that the problem has been overcome, would not it be right for the House to be told whether ABB was paid off in cash, whether some other favours were offered to ABB or, if neither of those was the case, how the Government have managed to pursue this privatisation against such obstacles?

**Mr. Newton:** I will bring that question to my right hon. Friend's attention, but I should have been more encouraged to do so had the hon. Gentleman not sought to work into it a number of allegations which I very much doubt have any justification whatsoever.

**Mr. Malcolm Chisholm** (Edinburgh, Leith): May we have a statement next week on the continuing problem of junior doctors' hours? The Leader of the House will be aware of recent high-profile cases, but may I point out that one of my constituents recently described to me how she sometimes works more than 100 hours a week at the Western general hospital in Edinburgh and regularly works beyond the 72-hour legal limit? As that is by no means exceptional in Edinburgh or elsewhere, is not it time that we had a statement on this most important matter?

**Mr. Newton:** The problem goes back a long way and again takes me back to a former incarnation. I shall bring the matter to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health, but I must point out that under her stewardship more significant progress has been made in tackling the problem of junior doctors' hours than for many years.

## Point of Order

4.2 pm

**Mr. Donald Dewar** (Glasgow, Garscadden): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. It is common ground among the parties that there is concern about the increasing use of delegated powers, statutory instruments and regulations while only enabling and paving clauses appear in the primary legislation.

The reason why I raise this rather general point is that yesterday, as you may remember, a report on the Jobseekers Bill was issued by the Delegated Powers Scrutiny Committee in another place. It is a Bill in which I took considerable interest and on which I spoke for the Labour party. We argued consistently that the Bill was in effect a skeleton measure and that, as almost everything was left to regulations and statutory instruments, it was almost impossible to evaluate the Government's true intent and how the legislation would work.

The Delegated Powers Scrutiny Committee concluded that the Bill was possibly a skeleton Bill and that the House should consider it in that light. It was very critical of a number of clauses, especially clause 6 which, it suggested, made it impossible to scrutinise the Bill appropriately and evaluate its true intent. The Committee said that it was impossible to subject the exercise of legislative power to an appropriate degree of parliamentary scrutiny. As a result, the Government were forced to recommit clause 6 to the Floor of the other place.

We understand that it is likely that there will now be a definition, for which we pressed repeatedly during the Bill's passage through the House but could not get, of the key terms "available for employment" and "actively seeking employment" on which benefit entitlement rests.

My concern, which is worth raising with you, Madam Speaker, and with the House, is that there is no equivalent in this place of the Delegated Powers Scrutiny Committee. We have the Select Committee on Statutory Instruments, but it can examine the statutory instruments only when they appear and long after the primary legislation has progressed through Parliament. The result of that, of course, is that the Committee is confined simply to whether statutory instruments are intra vires of the original Act and whether they have been properly drawn.

I do not make a partisan point—perhaps another Government will suffer such criticism, because the situation is convenient for Government—but there is increasing worry in the House about the way in which statutory instruments, in effect, are replacing primary legislation. Therefore, because they are subject to only very brief debate and cannot be amended, the House's scrutiny role, which is one of its absolutely essential reasons for existence, is being eroded and undermined.

I wonder whether it would be sensible for us to look at the precedent that was set in another place and consider whether we should consider this cause for anxiety when primary legislation is brought forward.

**Madam Speaker:** The hon. Gentleman has outlined a complex situation very succinctly. I have been very interested, as have hon. Members, in the way in which he has presented his case. What he seeks to do would require, as he knows, an amendment to Standing Order No. 124A. He may wish to make a case for such a change. It is not a matter for the Chair, but I understand the hon. Gentleman's interesting point. There are two ways in which he might tackle it: first, through the usual channels, or, secondly, taking it on his own account and tabling a motion.

# Royal Air Force

*[Relevant documents: The Seventh Report from the Defence Committee on Low Flying: Follow-up to the Fifth Report of Session 1989-90, HC 314 of Session 1993-94, and the Fifth Special Report, HC 686 of Session 1993-94, containing the Government's Reply thereto.]*

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—*[Dr. Liam Fox.]*

4.6 pm

**The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Roger Freeman):** This debate is aptly timed. The forthcoming VE day commemorations remind us of the enormous debt that we owe the Royal Air Force. Victory in 1945 was achieved only after years of effort and sacrifice. The picture was very different in 1940: most of Europe had been overrun, and all of southern England was in range of the Luftwaffe operating from airfields around the channel coasts. Britain, battered and weakened after Dunkirk, stood alone. But a successful invasion hinged on control of the air, and we turned to the Royal Air Force for the defence of Britain.

We remember with pride the battle of Britain, the first true air battle in history, when our outnumbered Air Force drove the Luftwaffe from the skies and crippled the invasion fleets then massing in the channel ports. The RAF's victory in 1940 preserved the safety of these islands, to become the springboard of final victory.

But victory was still far off. In the next few years, only Bomber Command, at great sacrifice, could take the war to the heartlands of the enemy, while Coastal Command played a key role in turning the crucial battle of the Atlantic in our favour. That maritime achievement, and the support given to allied land forces by both tactical and, at times, strategic air forces, set the tone for the inter-service co-operation that has been a continuing and growing aspect of RAF operations ever since.

**Mr. Bill Walker** (Tayside, North): I thank my right hon. Friend for allowing me to intervene so early. Does he agree that many of the air crew who flew in those dangerous operations were ex-air cadets? Does my right hon. Friend recognise the massive contribution that air cadets have made to the nation since that time?

**Mr. Freeman:** That is a timely intervention, because schoolchildren today and anyone under the age of 55, which I dare say includes both Front-Bench spokesmen, will not have been old enough during the second world war to remember those great events.

I particularly appreciate my hon. Friend's support for air cadets and sea cadets. I have just returned from my constituency, where, at Southfield school for girls, 1,000 girls, including many air cadets and sea cadets, celebrated—perhaps it was a little early—VE day. It is very important that every schoolchild understands the importance of VE day. I hope that every school—including, I am glad to say, those in my constituency—will embrace the recruitment of uniformed cadets and reservists.

In the 50 years since victory in Europe, the RAF has continued to maintain its tradition of professionalism. It provided a major element of our strategic and conventional deterrent forces through the long years of the cold war, helping to preserve the security of western Europe. It played a major part in operations in Malaysia, in the south Atlantic, in the Mediterranean and the middle east, and in other areas of the world.

Most recently, we all remember the magnificent contribution that the RAF made during the Gulf war, in which the air campaign was the key to success. As I speak, the RAF is fully engaged on a range of operations across the globe, about which my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces will say more when he winds up.

For the RAF, the past few years have seen a scale of change not experienced since the end of the second world war. We have now entered a new strategic era—a world, to quote the White Paper published yesterday by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence,

"in which we are immeasurably safer, but in which we face increased uncertainty and rapid change".

In that new and unpredictable strategic environment, we need forces capable of reacting quickly and effectively to a range of contingencies. We need forces and equipment offering flexibility, mobility, combat power and utility across the full range of military tasks in all three defence roles, as spelled out in the White Paper. Those are the characteristics of air power.

The restructuring of the RAF front line following "Britain's Defence for the Nineties" has now been completed.

**Lady Olga Maitland** (Sutton and Cheam): While my right hon. Friend is talking about restructuring the armed forces, is he aware of the deep concern and alarm among our senior service chiefs about the Labour party's proposal to permit homosexuals in our services? Does he not agree that that would undermine our discipline, and that it is not a realistic proposal?

**Mr. Freeman:** If my hon. Friend will permit me, I shall deal with that point in greater detail later. In the meantime, perhaps she will bear with me if I stick to the theme on which I had embarked.

As I was saying, the restructuring of the Royal Air Force front line, following "Britain's Defence for the Nineties", has now been completed. Subsequent events, and the similar conclusions reached by our allies, show that our response to the end of the cold war was soundly based. Our main priority since "Options for Change" has been to ensure that the resources allocated to the RAF are concentrated on the front line. We have scrutinised all aspects of our cost and management structure to that end.

Much of that process was under way before the 1994 defence costs study. Plans were in hand to rationalise the RAF headquarters structure, leading to the establishment of the new logistics, personnel and training commands last year. Substantial restructuring of the flying and ground training organisations was also in hand, as was a rationalisation of the three equipment supply depots into a single facility at Stafford, saving £160 million over the next 10 years.

A major study—the RAF manpower structure study—was in progress to assess the effects on RAF manpower of new technology, improved working practices and the extension of civilianisation and market testing.

**Mr. John Greenway** (Ryedale): On the subject of training and restructuring, when does my right hon. Friend expect to announce his final plans to incorporate Army

fixed-wing training with Air Force and Royal Navy fixed-wing training at RAF Scampton under the tri-service proposal in the defence costs study?

Will my right hon. Friend also consider undertaking a further review of flying training, the university air squadrons, and the employment of Bulldog and its possible replacement by a more modern aircraft, such as Firefly, which JEFTS—the Joint Elementary Flying Training Squadron—uses?

**Mr. Freeman:** I shall answer the second question, which falls to me, and I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces will answer the first later. However, I must point out that we have moved—or shall do shortly—to tri-service rotary-wing training, which I am sure the whole House will believe is sensible. My hon. Friend will answer the question about fixed-wing training.

As for the Bulldog and its possible replacement, I am aware that my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) has been vigorous in his support of a company in his constituency that makes the Firefly, an excellent aircraft. I confirm that we shall carefully examine the economics of replacing the Bulldog compared with those of other options, such as a mid-life update, with improvements to the Bulldog.

It is important that our university air squadrons receive the best possible equipment. The university air squadrons and the air cadets provide not only excellent and fertile recruitment grounds for the RAF, but serve a wider social purpose, and my colleagues in the Department would join me in emphasising the importance of those services.

The defence costs study, "Front Line First", built on this foundation. It aimed to preserve front-line capabilities and to reduce support costs without sacrificing effectiveness. Elementary and basic level flying training will now be conducted at RAF Cranwell and RAF Linton-on-Ouse respectively. Fast jet advanced flying training will be concentrated at RAF Valley. We have also decided to amalgamate single-service basic rotary-wing training into a tri-service defence helicopter flying school at RAF Shawbury. Following a period of consultation, we decided to close RAF Finningley and RAF Scampton.

We were also able to achieve substantial further savings in logistics support without sacrificing output or effectiveness. The completion this year of the new facility at RAF Wyton is a major step towards a more economical organisation designed to implement the new business practices needed to deliver lower support costs.

The RAF is at the forefront of advanced logistics techniques which compare well with the best practice in industry. The aim is to realise significant cost benefits while making the logistic chain more flexible. We are making a substantial investment in the RAF's logistics information technology strategy, which will help to provide the most cost-effective through-life support for all the RAF's equipment programmes. It will also support deployed operations worldwide. This ambitious strategy will be a pathfinder for similar initiatives in the other two services.

**Mrs. Margaret Ewing** (Moray): The Minister has referred to market testing, and the importance that the Government are attaching to savings. Why are the 500 important RAF personnel involved in the maintenance of flight simulators not being allowed to make in-house bids for the service? That is particularly important in my area, which contains RAF Lossiemouth and RAF Kinloss, and there are a substantial number of jobs at stake. Why are those skilled personnel not being allowed the facility of making an in-house bid?

**Mr. Freeman:** There are two reasons. The hon. Lady asks a perfectly sensible and serious question, which applies not just to simulation training. First, the RAF must reduce its uniformed manpower to meet the economies about which I have talked. Employing a service man or woman is more expensive than employing a civilian, and is less flexible. We must look at support activities such as training, but also at the logistics command, to see where non-core activities can be performed better by the private sector.

Secondly, in addition to the pressure on numbers, it is sometimes better to contractorise an entire operation, and it is for the benefit of the taxpayer, and, I believe, of the RAF, if that function can be performed more cheaply, and in some cases better, by the private sector. I appreciate that that presents problems in the short term for the RAF personnel who are performing the tasks, but they are in the RAF only for a certain period, and in some cases, they can be reassigned.

**Mrs. Ewing:** I understand the Minister's point, but why should those personnel be denied the right to make an in-house bid? Surely, with the rights of a democracy, and given the skills of the personnel, they should have the facility to make a tender themselves. Why are they being denied that facility?

**Mr. Freeman:** I had hoped that I had explained the rationale, which is that there are functions which need not, or should not, be performed by service men or women. There are many other examples where we welcome in-house bids and where the function can and should be performed in part or in whole by service men and women in the future. We have made strategic judgments that it would be better if certain functions were performed not by service men but by the private sector. The hon. Lady may disagree, and I am sure that she will contribute to the debate.

**Mr. Peter Hardy** (Wentworth): That matter will obviously loom large throughout the debate, but does the Minister accept that, if the Air Force is to continue to be a customer—perhaps increasingly a customer—of private operations, it needs to be an intelligent customer, and should therefore retain substantial skills to ensure that the taxpayer gets a good deal?

**Mr. Freeman:** I entirely agree with the hon. Gentleman. Where we might disagree is on whether simulation training falls within the activities that the services should perform. If he will bear with me, I will briefly cover RAF Sealand and RAF St. Athan, where it is the Government's judgment that the RAF should retain an element of being an intelligent customer, and should therefore stay in that business.

Returning to the first part of my remarks, given the new emphasis placed on flexibility and mobility, we judged it no longer necessary to maintain both our air stations in Germany, and plan to close RAF Laarbruch in 1999. Work continues to assess the most cost-effective, long-term basing arrangements for the Harriers and support helicopters, which will return to the United Kingdom.

*[Mr. Freeman]*

"Front Line First" gave a substantial impetus to the Government's "Competing for Quality" initiative, to which the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) referred, which was designed to improve the quality of public services and gain better value for money by expanding competition.

The RAF manpower structure study confirmed that there was scope for the extension of that initiative in the support area, and our aim is to concentrate our scarce and expensive resources of highly trained military manpower on those operational and support tasks that need their skills and qualities. For other tasks, we will use the "Competing for Quality" programme to secure long-term value for money, substantial savings in cost, efficiency improvements and higher standards of service.

Our aim is to complete RAF support activities, which account for some £400 million per annum, by the end of the century under that programme. That is in addition to the £2 billion of running costs—leaving aside equipment procurement—that the RAF already spends in the private sector every year.

I said in the defence debate last October that we intended to press ahead with a vigorous market-testing programme, within the framework of Government ownership, for the major engineering establishments at RAF Sealand and RAF St. Athan. Since then, consultation with industry has confirmed our view that there are good prospects for achieving best value for money through competition and private sector involvement.

Subject to trade union consultation, we have now concluded that, at RAF Sealand, the way forward should be to allow the private sector to compete for the management of the facility as a whole. The continued involvement of service men and women is assumed, as is the case at St. Athan.

We intend to develop a formal statement of requirements broad enough to cover a range of management solutions at RAF Sealand, including those based on partnering arrangements between the public and private sector—that is to say, a private sector company joining the Air Force in the management and running of RAF Sealand. There will be an opportunity for an in-house bid for the management of the facility at RAF Sealand—as I said, service men and women will continue to work there—and our aim is to have the new structure in place by July next year.

The position at RAF St. Athan is more complex, given the diverse nature of the work and the substantial service presence. We have concluded that work at St. Athan on combat aircraft maintenance, which is closely related to the front line, should for now remain a direct service task. For the other work, which forms the majority of that done at the site, we propose to move as quickly as possible to competitions based on discrete packages of work, again allowing the opportunity for in-house bids. Subject to consultation with the trade unions, our intention now is to develop an agreed framework and time scale for moving ahead.

The combined effects of the rationalisation and restructuring measures that I have described will have a major effect on RAF service and civilian personnel. We have announced that a redundancy programme, involving some 8,600 service personnel, is needed for the RAF, of which just over 1,000 were planned before the defence costs study. Volunteers have been sought for redundancy in 1995-96, and work is continuing on the composition of the second phase in 1996-97. The first phase—some 2,100 redundancies—will be volunteers, but we expect that there will have to be some compulsory redundancies—about 6,500—in the second phase in 1996-97.

Change on that scale, however necessary, is inevitably painful and disruptive for those concerned. My ministerial colleagues and I are only too well aware of the extent of turbulence and uncertainty, and the effect on the morale of the service men and women and civilians concerned, and of their families.

**Mr. David Lidington** (Aylesbury): Does my right hon. Friend acknowledge that, although there are strong arguments in favour of the restructuring that the Government have set in train, it produces great uncertainty for many service men and women, including many of my constituents who serve at RAF Halton and RAF Strike Command, as they and their families do not yet know how the changes initiated nationally will affect them? Will he undertake to press on senior officers of the Royal Air Force the importance of making it clear as soon as possible to individual service men and women how they personally will be affected, so that some certainty is restored to them?

**Mr. Freeman:** I can give my hon. Friend that assurance. It is extremely important that we identify which service men and women have been selected for redundancy, because, until that is done, there will be uncertainty. I understand how the uncertainty affects the whole of the Royal Air Force, not just those involved. But the sequence of the ending of the cold war, involving reductions in the front line, and then the defence costs study to try to economise on our support in the best way possible, producing good value for money but improving and, in some cases, enhancing our front line, must be the right way forward.

**Mrs. Ewing:** Will the Minister confirm that there will be full negotiations with any service man or woman who is asked to accept redundancy under the current plans, and that the existing regulations will not be altered? For those who remain within the service, will he touch on the vexed issue of housing, given the considerable debate about the transfer of RAF housing to agency status?

**Mr. Freeman:** My hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces listened intently to the hon. Lady's question, and will respond when he winds up the debate, because her point refers not just to the Royal Air Force. The hon. Lady deserves a proper reply, and she will get one from my hon. Friend, if not verbally, then in writing.

While considering the morale of the armed forces, I should like to say something about the policy of discharging those members of the armed forces who admit to being homosexual or who engage in homosexual activity. Discharge is the policy recommended by our military advisers and fully supported by the Government.

The Ministry of Defence has long taken the view that homosexuality is not compatible with securing the aims of the armed forces, because it undermines the good order and discipline necessary for military effectiveness. This is not a moral judgment, but a practical assessment by those best placed to make it—the military—of the implications of homosexual orientation on military life. It is therefore

our policy administratively to discharge personnel who admit to being homosexual or who engage in homosexual activity.

We consider that homosexuals and homosexual activity should be excluded from the armed forces in that way because of the different, and unique, nature of service life. No parallel exists in civilian life. Service personnel are often required to live and work together in very close proximity to one another. They have little choice about living in communal single-sex accommodation, with the resultant lack of privacy. At times, they must work in difficult circumstances, under considerable stress, where operational requirements take precedence over personal privacy and comfort. In such circumstances, absolute trust and confidence between all ranks is essential.

Moreover, some 35 per cent. of new recruits to the armed services as a whole are aged under 18. The services have a responsibility for the welfare and morale of their young recruits, and in that sense, act in loco parentis. Parents, as well as the young people themselves, trust the services to look after and safeguard them properly. We should be failing in our duty if we did not do so.

The House will already have appreciated the fact that the shadow Secretary of State for Defence has said that the ban on homosexuals in the armed forces is an infringement of civil liberties. He was reported in the *Daily Express* of 29 April 1995 as saying:

"The policy is that homosexuality will not be a reason for dismissal from the Armed Forces. That will be our policy after the next election."

On 22 April, he was reported in *The Daily Telegraph* as saying that, within a month of the Labour party ever taking office,

"a working party would be set up to introduce new regulations to lift the current ban on homosexuals serving in the armed forces."

He said:

"We will work out a way to hit the ground running."

I quite understand, from a moral standpoint, that people may adopt different approaches to homosexuality. I am not entering into any argument on the moral issues, because that would be inappropriate. Hon. Members on both sides of the House have different views. Upon military advice, however, and with the full support of Her Majesty's Government, we do not believe that it is appropriate to retain homosexuals in the armed forces.

**Dr. David Clark** (South Shields): I have listened carefully to what the Minister said and the tone in which he said it. He referred to reports in *The Daily Telegraph*. The Labour party's position was read out to journalists from that paper on four separate occasions, but they ignored it completely. I am therefore glad to have the opportunity to make our policy clear.

As the Minister knows, and as was read out to *The Daily Telegraph*, this is a problem currently before the courts—indeed, I believe that it is before the High Court within the next two weeks. This problem faces our armed forces as well as virtually all other armed forces in the western world. As *The Daily Telegraph* was told:

"Other countries have faced similar problems and have ultimately been able to arrive at a constructive solution, acceptable both to the Armed Forces and society as a whole.

A Labour Government will therefore establish a Commission"—

if the problem still exists—

"to study the experiences of other nations".

I want to emphasise that the commission will obviously include the chiefs of staff, as it must do. It will

"adopt the best practices towards evolving a solution for the British Armed Forces."

That was a moderate statement, and I was delighted to note that it was basically endorsed by the vice-chairman of the Conservative party on the BBC at 7 o'clock on Sunday.

**Mr. Freeman:** The deputy chairman of the Conservative party has written to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State to explain that his contribution to the programme was misinterpreted. His view is not as it was reported.

I have made the Government's position crystal clear, so I hope that there is no room for misunderstanding it. The hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) must make the role of the commission clear to the House. He said that the chiefs of staff would serve on it, which sounds a little incredible to me. The hon. Gentleman has been quoted as saying that the purpose of the commission is to work out how to implement change rather than whether such a change should be made. Doubtless other Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen will shed more light on the subject. I have put—with clarity, I hope—the Government's position.

**Mr. Harry Cohen** (Leyton): I applaud the statement from my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark), which represents the right way to proceed.

The Minister has said that the Government's position is absolutely clear, and that they are not making any moral judgment, but the Government have obviously made such a judgment by saying that they do not want homosexuals in the armed forces. Other armed forces have got round the matter and include personnel of homosexual orientation, which has not caused any of the problems that the Minister has pretended would exist.

This year is the 50th anniversary of the end of the last war. The Minister should remember that then, the country was happy for many people of homosexual orientation to fight and to lay down their lives for it. Their orientation was not held against them by the country then, so why is the Minister adopting such a backward attitude now?

**Mr. Freeman:** I am not casting any aspersions upon the valour of the service men and women who may or may not have been homosexual in the second world war—the hon. Gentleman should not misinterpret my remarks. As the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman has acknowledged, I am not making a moral judgment. I have simply said that, in today's circumstances and given the size and nature not only of the threat that faces our armed forces but of the way in which they discharge their duties—hon. Members should not forget that we have a Regular Army, Navy and Air Force—it is a military judgment that homosexuals should not be retained in our armed forces. The Government concur with that.

**Mr. Bill Walker:** Is not part of the problem the fact that our debate is largely being conducted by people who have had no military service? As a teenager, I served in a remote part of the middle east, living in a tent with several other adults. I was by far the youngest person there. The circumstances would have been totally unsuitable for any type of situation with a homosexual, especially on active service.

**Mr. Freeman:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend.

If you will allow me to press on, Mr. Deputy Speaker—

**Mr. John Wilkinson** (Ruislip-Northwood): Will my right hon. Friend give way on a further matter?

When the House considered that matter most recently, in 1990—I chaired the special Select Committee on the Armed Forces Bill—it was the Committee's opinion that homosexuality was incompatible with proper military discipline, and that those who had a homosexual disposition that in any sense impinged on their military duties should be administratively discharged.

Will my right hon. Friend reassure the House by saying now that, were that matter to be taken to the European Court, and were the European Court to judge that the dismissal of homosexuals from the armed forces of the Crown was in breach of the European equal opportunities directive, Her Majesty's Government would take no notice, but would do what is right in the light of the interests of the country and the maintenance of good morale and discipline in our armed forces?

**Mr. Freeman:** My hon. Friend poses a question that I find difficult to answer, partly because it is not a matter for me. I simply say, however, regarding the first part of his intervention, which is much appreciated, that, both in 1990 and, as I recall—I also served on that Committee, as the Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces—five years before that, it was an all-party conclusion that the present policy, which I have outlined, was the correct one, and that homosexuals should be administratively discharged from the armed forces.

I shall now discuss equipment. Following "Front Line First", we announced some very significant early improvements to the RAF's operational capability, including the addition of 12 Harrier aircraft to the front line and substantial additional provision for front-line flying training, which, when it comes into full effect, will result in our front-line air crew being able to fly at rates among the highest in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

The successful outcome of "Front Line First" also underpinned our future investment plans. The scale of those plans for the RAF may not be generally understood. Our programme covers all capability areas, and is designed to replace certain equipment and to deal with the proliferation of sophisticated threat systems and advances in technology.

Eurofighter 2000 will be the key aircraft for the RAF in the first decade of the 21st century. With new short and medium-range air-to-air missiles, Eurofighter will offer a superb capability. The development phase of the programme is making steady progress. Flight testing is expected to resume later this month at British Aerospace Warton. The third prototype, the first to be equipped with the new EJ200 engines from Eurojet—the engine consortium in which Rolls-Royce plays a key role—should also undertake its first flight, in Italy, this month.

We and our partner nations of Germany, Italy and Spain hope to sign the EF2000 development reorientation memorandum of understanding shortly. That will enable us to place the revised main development contracts with industry, placing the project on a much tauter footing. We are also in discussion with our partners about the arrangements for the production investment, production and integrated logistic support phases. We also intend to enhance our capability—

**Mr. William Cash** (Stafford): Will my right hon. Friend accept the congratulations of my constituents in Stafford on the way in which the issues of equipment spares, and all the things that RAF Stafford 16 Maintenance Unit does so well, have been handled? Will he say that that will continue, and that the extremely effective record of the Government in respect of 16 MU will continue into the future?

**Mr. Freeman:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend, and I join him in paying tribute to RAF Stafford. Of course Stafford will play its part in supporting future aircraft equipment programmes, including the EF2000.

**Sir Jerry Wiggin** (Weston-super-Mare): Before my right hon. Friend leaves the subject of the Eurofighter, will he give the House an assurance that, in taking the final decisions about the future of that programme, he will use financial yardsticks that are as rigid and careful as those that were applied to the purchase of the EH101 multi-purpose helicopter?

**Mr. Freeman:** I can give my hon. Friend that assurance. I am grateful for his support for the continued existence of the helicopter design and manufacturing capability in the United Kingdom, which is extremely important.

We also intend to enhance our capability for deep low-level attack by day and night and in all weathers. As part of "Front Line First", we announced a substantial package of improvements to 142 Tornado GR1 aircraft, sufficient to sustain eight front-line squadrons well into the next century. The order, which has been placed with British Aerospace, is worth some £700 million.

We need to provide modern weapon systems for our advanced combat aircraft. Advanced precision weapons were used to great effect in the Gulf war. Again as part of "Front Line First", we signed a contract for Paveway III bombs and laser designators which, with associated work, totalled about £300 million.

Since "Front Line First", we have issued invitations to tender for two more key weapon systems. The conventionally armed stand-off missile will allow long-range precision targeting of strategic, tactical and infrastructure assets. The air-launched anti-armour weapon will be capable of attacking future main battle tanks and a range of other armoured vehicles and air defence systems. The competitions currently under way are a vital part of our procurement strategy for those new weapons, which are due to enter service early in the next century.

The time scales needed to develop and produce complex weapon systems are such that we must also give thought now to aircraft that will come into service well into the future. Tornado GR4 aircraft will need to be replaced in the second decade of the next century. The requirement for a future offensive aircraft could be addressed in a number of ways; a European collaborative venture is one possibility.

Preliminary studies to define the relevant technologies are in hand on a co-operative basis with France, and a memorandum of understanding is being drawn up that will allow the work to be carried forward. We need to minimise the risk inherent in such major new development projects, and we fully recognise the benefits of demonstrating, at an early stage, the key advanced technologies involved to ensure that subsequent procurement decisions are soundly based.

Following the signature of a statement of intent before Easter, we are also negotiating with the United States a memorandum of understanding for participation in its joint advanced strike technology programme. The US programme aims to provide a family of closely related and affordable combat aircraft for the US services. Our prime interest is in the advanced short take-off vertical landing variant, which could provide a replacement for the Royal Navy's Sea Harrier aircraft in the next century. We are also exploring whether one of the variants from the JAST programme could satisfy the requirements of the RAF for a Tornado GR4 replacement.

The E3D airborne early warning aircraft has justified its central place in the future force structure in a range of recent operations. At sea, our Nimrod aircraft continue to carry out essential maritime patrol tasks. I was pleased to announce earlier in the year that we had invited four potential prime contractors to bid for an aircraft to replace the Nimrod early in the next century. We expect a contract to be let in late summer 1996.

Air transport is an integral component of air power in the new strategic environment. It is essential for rapid power projection, and for a range of peace support and humanitarian missions. We announced last December that we would purchase 25 Hercules C130J aircraft to satisfy the immediate operational needs of the RAF, and that we would rejoin the future large aircraft programme at the end of the feasibility phase, subject to a number of conditions being met. We hope to do that by the end of the current calendar year.

The contract for the C130J aircraft was placed with Lockheed Aeronautical Systems Company on 3 March. There is a significant UK industrial interest in the programme: some 35 British companies have competed successfully to supply equipment to Lockheed. Their achievements will provide the UK economy with business opportunities estimated at around £1 billion. Following the announcement, we are actively seeking to establish a satisfactory basis for rejoining the FLA programme. Work to date underlines our strong resolve to help to establish a viable programme, based on commercial management, under the umbrella of the Airbus consortium and a competitively priced aircraft.

As the House is aware—and as my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-Mare (Sir J. Wiggin) has just pointed out—there has been a long-standing requirement for additional support helicopters. We announced in March that we would purchase 22 utility EH101 and eight Chinook helicopters, together with an additional six Chinooks to maintain the current fleet, taking into account attrition losses. That decision, which was widely welcomed, will lead to a substantial increase—some 70 per cent.—in support helicopter capability, as well as employment and industrial benefits.

The White Paper refers to a number of other improvements made possible by stability in the provision of resources for defence, and the continuing efforts by budget holders to extract the greatest output from the resources allocated to them.

Let me end by referring to the defence industrial base. The size and extent of the investment programme that I have outlined indicates the central role that industry will continue to play in delivering the front line of the future for the RAF as well as for the other two services. Defence expenditure in the UK, by the MOD and by overseas customers, sustained over 400,000 jobs in the industry in 1992-93, the last year for which estimates are available.

UK companies are responsible for some 90 per cent. of UK defence equipment spending. The UK draws great benefit from an efficient and technologically capable defence industrial base which contributes significantly to the UK's export order book, winning new business worth some £5 billion a year. It also provides significant spin-off into the civil sector, and skilled training for many of the country's craftsmen.

In recent years, my Department has pursued a policy of competitive procurement, with the aim of providing the right equipment at the right price and the right time to ensure that our forces are properly equipped, supported and trained, while making the best use of taxpayers' money. As a result, there has been a dramatic improvement in the efficiency of the UK's defence industrial base. Industry has shown on numerous occasions that it can compete in the world's defence markets, and win against tough competition.

The current restructuring of the defence industry in Europe and the US is likely to continue as a result of declining defence budgets, the increasing costs of high technology development and global competition. In common with its counterparts elsewhere, the UK defence industry must continue to evolve in response to those developments.

How industry is structured, and what it sells, must principally be determined by companies operating within the market, and not by Governments; but it is clear that there is a growing commercial necessity for more collaboration, both with other European countries and with the US. I am pleased to see that many UK companies are entering into joint ventures and co-operative arrangements. There is no doubt that those cross-border alliances will be a vital component in meeting our future defence equipment needs.

I recognise that Government cannot stand aside from these developments. We already do all we can to assist industry by discussing our future equipment plans as openly as possible. There are long-standing channels of communication such as the National Defence Industries Council, frequent meetings with trade associations and the publication of the "Defence Contracts Bulletin". We shall seek to sustain and develop those channels to make them more effective. We want a genuine partnership between the Ministry of Defence and British industry.

More fundamentally, we must recognise industry's concerns to maintain the UK's position in a declining world defence market. We share an interest in ensuring that we retain healthy and forward-looking defence industries, capable of competing with the best in the world and contributing as equal partners in major international collaborative projects, not least in Europe. A strong national industrial capability in the defence sector will help to ensure that we can provide our armed forces with the equipment that they will need in the longer term.

The Ministry of Defence is therefore looking at its own procurement practices and planning assumptions to ensure that such factors, including the advantages and disadvantages of off-the-shelf procurement or collaborative or national development of equipment, are fully taken into account, while always maintaining the principle of value for money. As part of that exercise, my officials will wish to take into account the views of

*[Mr. Freeman]*

industry and, of course, of the Defence and Trade and Industry Select Committees in their current work. I shall be giving evidence to the combined Select Committees later this month.

From this Government, the RAF will have the full range of equipment it needs to sustain the proud traditions built up in the course of its first 77 years. It will be more flexible, mobile and able to apply air power in complex and sophisticated ways beyond the dreams of its founding fathers. Above all, it will retain the commitment to excellence—in operations, training, technology and management—that has sustained its past achievements.

We recognise that the key to all this will be our ability to continue to attract and retain the high-quality people needed to deliver such a challenging agenda. The next couple of years will be difficult and demanding, but I am confident that the RAF will surmount the challenge, as it has done so often in the past.

For their part, the Government are committed—as yesterday's White Paper makes clear—to injecting a period of stability after the prolonged and difficult, but inevitable and essential, process of change following the end of the cold war.

In *The Guardian* of 3 May, the shadow Foreign Secretary promised that the Labour party would

"build on its new statement of aims and values . . . to increase the momentum on policy-making with a string of statements before the end of the year".

I turned the page to read precisely what that meant for defence.

**Mr. Martin Redmond** (Don Valley): Will the Minister give way?

**Mr. Freeman:** Perhaps the House would like to hear about the Labour party's policy first. As to defence, *The Guardian* stated:

"No policy paper is underway, although Shadow Secretary David Clark has promised a full defence review within six months of coming into office."

**Mr. Redmond:** I thank the Minister for giving way. I draw his attention to a Conservative Lord Chancellor's remarks to me when I wrote to him quoting from a newspaper. He said, "Don't believe everything you read in the newspapers, as it sometimes rots the mind." I advise the Minister not to do any long-term newspaper reading.

**Mr. Freeman:** I find it hard to discover, either from the newspapers or from past statements by Opposition Front-Bench spokespersons, precisely what Labour party policy is. *The Times* of 2 March stated:

"David Clark, the Shadow Defence Secretary, said the review"

to which I have just referred

"would remove the uncertainty from the Armed Forces".

The Labour party does not have a defence policy, other than the one regarding homosexuality in the armed forces to which I referred earlier. The hon. Member for South Shields has made his party's position clear in that regard, but he has referred to no other policies except the review. The review would cause instability and uncertainty, and it would damage the morale of the armed forces.

**Dr. David Clark:** On that very narrow point, it is worth while informing the Minister—I know that he is a very reasonable man—that the Labour party has established a policy commission to examine foreign affairs and defence issues. It has held meetings, and has received papers from many experts. We are evolving a policy that we will present to the British public at the next election. I am certain that it will be endorsed, and that there will be a Labour Government.

**Mr. Freeman:** The whole House has heard the hon. Gentleman's message that work is in hand. I think that our reply is, "Hurrah!" We look forward to hearing about the Labour party's policies, but we will not know this afternoon precisely what they are. I have spelt out the Government's policies concerning the Royal Air Force, and I hope that the House will endorse them.

4.51 pm

**Mr. Eric Martlew** (Carlisle): I feel sure that Opposition Members would wish to be associated with the remarks of the Minister of State for Defence Procurement about the dedication, professionalism and sacrifice of past generations in the Royal Air Force, as well as of our present serving personnel. That does not apply only to the RAF; it applies throughout our armed forces. We are well served by the people who choose to defend this country.

In the run-up to the VE day celebrations, we are delighted that the Minister of State for the Armed Forces, the grandson of our second world war Prime Minister, Sir Winston Churchill, will wind up the debate today from the Conservative Front Bench. I am sure that Sir Winston, who had a great sense of history, would have been extremely proud that the Minister should be replying to the debate on behalf of the Government. However, I am certain that both Churchill and the Minister would agree that victory in Europe 50 years ago was not the achievement of only one man; it resulted from the collective leadership of the wartime coalition Government, the courage and the immense sacrifice on the part of our armed forces and the fact that the people of this country had a single-minded determination to defend freedom and democracy.

It was with the 50th anniversary of VE day in mind that I recently visited the RAF museum at Hendon. I recommend a visit to that museum to any hon. Member who has not already visited it. It is a credit to the RAF and to the museum curator and the staff. The Minister of State for Defence Procurement said that very few present Front-Bench Members were alive during the war or immediately after it. As a schoolboy, I remember the legends and the stories about the famous wartime aircraft. I recalled those stories when I visited the museum and saw the Hurricanes and Spitfires and the Halifax, Wellington and Lancaster bombers.

The visit brought home to me the immensity of the industrial war machine that we developed to defeat the Nazis. We needed not only quality but quantity of aircraft, and we managed to provide it. Although we no longer supply that quantity of aircraft in this country, there is no doubt that we still build some of the finest military aircraft in the world. We should all be very proud of that fact.

The museum collection also contains portraits of the RAF leaders during the war—Air Marshal Sir Hugh Dowding and the Marshal of the Air Force, Sir Arthur Harris. In recent years, it has become popular to denigrate their achievements. Hindsight is a wonderful thing, but

the reality is that we were in the middle of a major war, we had suffered terrible bombing by the Germans and I think that those RAF leaders took the right decisions for that time. I wish that people would look at the issues from that perspective instead of constantly criticising the leaders' achievements.

The one statistic we should never forget is that more than 70,000 air crew were listed as either killed or missing during the five and a half years of world war two. More than 50 per cent. of that number were from Bomber Command. They made that sacrifice to protect freedom and democracy—something that we should never take for granted.

The RAF still protects freedom and democracy. In the former Yugoslavia, the Jaguars and Tornados are helping to police the no-fly zone. Every day, Hercules air crews risk their lives delivering medical supplies and food to the beleaguered people of the besieged city of Sarajevo. We do not perform those duties only in Bosnia. The RAF served with distinction during the Gulf war and RAF forces are still stationed in that area today. Harriers operating from Turkey police Iraqi Kurdistan. Under the United Nations mandate, Tornado bombers fly out of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states to protect the marsh Arabs in the southern Iraqi marshlands. If it were not for their presence, the genocidal regime of Saddam Hussein would reap a terrible harvest among that civilian population. The people of those areas believe in the RAF.

Without the help of the RAF, the security forces in Northern Ireland would not have been able to cope during the 25 years of the troubles. I recently had the pleasure—if that is the word—of being flown from Derry to Belfast airport by the RAF during a force eight gale. The crew members were very good, and I was very frightened and glad to get off the plane. Their professionalism shone through. I think that there is a feeling in some circles—it is referred to in the defence estimates report—that the troubles are over. Following yesterday's incident in Northern Ireland, we must not take too much for granted. We must be very careful when it comes to cutting the size of our forces on that basis.

The people of Britain are very grateful for the search and rescue role performed by the RAF using the Sea King helicopters. At this point, I must express some concern about the search and rescue review that took place in 1992. That review left this country with what I can only describe as a minimal service.

The decision to rationalise was based on the fact that the Sea King had replaced the Wessex. In my opinion, that cost-cutting exercise could cost lives in future. That was realised by the Select Committee on Transport, which recommended that RAF Manston and RAF Brawdy in Wales should remain open. The Government ignored that advice.

The reallocation of search and rescue has been criticised by many local communities as response times have increased because of the changes. The change of cover implemented in the North sea, the Dover straits and St. George's channel no longer meets the criteria set out by the helicopter coverage group. Although those areas are not large, they are intensively used, especially by ferries to the continent. If we are not careful, there will be a major disaster and we will not have adequate helicopter coverage to respond in sufficient time, resulting in the loss of lives.

There is no doubt that the replacement of the Wessex by the Sea King was welcome, but no matter how modern and speedy a helicopter is, it cannot be in two places at once. The number of helicopters has been reduced, when there is an increased demand on the search and rescue service from mountain rescue teams who, for health and safety reasons, increasingly call on that service.

In my constituency, where there are no mountains but there are fells, the mountain rescue service regularly uses helicopters to get injured people to hospital quickly and to safeguard members of the mountain rescue team who have to descend through difficult terrain.

I am sorry that the Government have left the search and rescue service severely overstretched. I call on them to take action to redress the position immediately before there is unnecessary loss of life.

**Mr. Phil Gallie** (Ayr): Can the hon. Gentleman report any incident this year when a helicopter has been requested by the mountain rescue service and not provided, except in very bad weather conditions?

**Mr. Martlew:** I understand that there was an incident in the channel and a Belgian helicopter got there first.

**Mr. Gallie:** I was asking about mountain rescue.

**Mr. Martlew:** The hon. Gentleman is playing with words; he hears only what he wants to hear. There is no doubt that response times have deteriorated and there is increased concern. I am putting it on record before there is a disaster, as the Government need to be warned.

**Mr. Bill Walker:** Perhaps I can help the hon. Gentleman. The search and rescue capability that used to be at RAF Leuchars in my constituency is sadly missed. There have been incidents when people were unable to get a helicopter when one was required and that is rather sad.

**Mr. Martlew:** I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's point. If we keep closing RAF base after RAF base, the Government will need to consider whether alternatives should be used. The RAF would not like that because it considers it to be valuable training, but we have to make sure that lives are not lost.

**Mrs. Ewing:** We all agree that search and rescue services are an important part of the work of the RAF. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that there is no need to accept arguments that are often propounded by other hon. Members that the capability represents a cost to the taxpayer, because all the RAF stations involved in mountain search and rescue services regard it as part and parcel of their general training, therefore it is a commitment rather than a cost to the taxpayer?

**Mr. Martlew:** I understand that there is a cost to the taxpayer, but it is one worth paying. The hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) suggested that local authorities should pay towards it. That is not the case. If there are any grounds whatsoever for that argument, perhaps the money should come out of the Department of Transport budget. I see that the Secretary of State agrees.

I am concerned about overstretching of the search and rescue capability and generally in the RAF. We now have 50 aircraft flying on behalf of the United Nations in Iraq and Bosnia.

**Lady Olga Maitland:** The hon. Gentleman seems to be advocating that we should spend more rather than less on the RAF. How does he square that with six consecutive Labour party conference motions suggesting that we should cut our defence spending by £6 billion?

**Mr. Martlew:** I find that difficult to accept from the hon. Lady, whose party has cut defence by 30 per cent. in recent years. According to the defence estimates, the Government plan to make cuts of £1.5 billion in future, so that they can give back the tax before the next general election. I do not accept that argument from the hon. Lady.

**Mr. Freeman:** I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is not seeking to mislead the House on this point, but from 1 April this financial year and for the next three years, our defence expenditure is stable.

**Mr. Martlew:** The Minister should read the defence estimates.

**The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind):** I wrote them.

**Mr. Martlew:** The Secretary of State may have written them, but he obviously was not reading what he had written. On page 136 there is a commitment to cut £1.5 billion. If that is not the case, why did he announce that there would have to be compulsory redundancies in the armed forces in future? It is because the Government are cutting defence. It is wrong for the Government to attempt to mislead the House. I hope that we shall debate the defence estimates before the recess, rather than afterwards, in order to discuss the matter more fully.

The hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) has already expressed concern about overstretch, which puts great pressure on the aircraft, pilots and support teams. Current operations are placing particular strain on certain sectors. I understand that the Hercules fleet is facing real problems. We have NATO bases in Turkey and Italy, but the Hercules fleet has to carry out more than regular flights to service those bases. When the Select Committee was considering the matter, it stated that defence policy was being decided

"by the availability of scarce resources rather than the dictates of national interest or international obligations."

The only possible conclusion is that the Government have cut the RAF too far.

I am not totally negative about the Government, as I am a very fair man.

**The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Nicholas Soames):** In the forthcoming Labour defence review, should it ever happen, will the hon. Gentleman clarify for the House what changes he would be likely to make to the RAF and whether he thinks it would get bigger or smaller?

**Mr. Martlew:** I remember the Minister saying that he considered his time in the Army as a career break between Eton and the Cabinet. If he carries on asking such questions, it could be a very long career break. The defence review will tell us the answer.

I shall not be totally negative about the Government's downsizing of the RAF. We congratulate the decision of the Secretary of State to remove unilaterally the nuclear deterrent role of the RAF. That role began in the 1950s and continued through Labour Governments, but the Secretary of State had the courage to decide to remove it. I only wish that he had the courage to take credit for it. Time and again he comes to the Dispatch Box foaming at the mouth with artificial indignation about Labour Members who are long-lapsed members of CND, when he has done more to reduce the number of nuclear weapons than anybody else in British history.

The Secretary of State came to the Dispatch Box frothing and foaming on the day he announced the cancellation of the tactical air-to-surface missile—TASM—the RAF nuclear missile. The same thing happened when he announced that the United Kingdom would have 21 per cent. fewer nuclear warheads than in the 1970s. Then it was announced that the Government would withdraw the RAF's nuclear bomb, the WE177. I understand that it is to be withdrawn by 1998, when originally it was intended that it would be in service until the next century. Earlier in the week, the Secretary of State fumed, huffed and puffed at the Dispatch Box about the CND. That was followed by a statement which, on analysis, suggested that we shall have fewer nuclear warheads on Trident than ever before. The right hon. and learned Gentleman has reduced the number of nuclear warheads by 21 per cent. and reduced their explosive power by 59 per cent. Those are the comparisons to be drawn with the levels of the 1970s when we had a Labour Government.

**Mr. Rifkind:** As I have not been the Secretary of State for Defence since the early 1970s, I can hardly claim credit for comparisons with the 1970s. The hon. Gentleman is correct to say that there has been a reduction in the number of warheads and the explosive yield of our nuclear force, comparing today with the early 1970s and the coming into effect of the non-proliferation treaty. As the hon. Gentleman has been so kind as to be complimentary about the reductions in nuclear weapons for which I have been responsible, will he accept, given that background, that the Labour party's current proposal to insist that Trident should carry only the same number of warheads as was carried by Polaris is based on a clear and fundamental misunderstanding of the respective systems? It is a simplistic approach and the outcome would be very much against the UK's interests. The policy is not compatible with our requirement to ensure the same deterrent effect with Trident as with Polaris.

**Mr. Martlew:** I would give more credence to the right hon. and learned Gentleman's views if he had not responded as he did to my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) when he asked him to scrap TASM. The right hon. and learned Gentleman gave a similar answer on that occasion. We think of him as carrying on his good work. Perhaps in future he will be known as Malcolm the Disarmer.

**Mr. Rifkind:** I much appreciate the hon. Gentleman's generosity in giving way. Perhaps he will be good enough to consult the record on my views about TASM since first being asked about it. He might recall that I said that the matter was under review, and that was exactly the position. We concluded that, because we could achieve the same sub-strategic deterrent with the use of Trident at virtually no additional cost to the defence budget, the TASM approach was infinitely preferable to financing at well over £1 billion a new sub-strategic system to be carried by the Royal Air Force. As we could maintain the same sub-strategic capability with a much smaller burden on the defence budget, it made sense to go in that direction.

**Mr. Martlew:** I am not criticising the Secretary of State. If, however, he had taken the Opposition's advice on TASM two years earlier, development costs could have been saved.

I must praise the Secretary of State for all that he has done in the context of nuclear weapons. I understand that his honorary membership of the CND is in the post.

The Labour party has always taken the view that we should provide our armed forces with the best available equipment. At the same time, we need to ensure value for money. Wherever possible the equipment should be produced entirely or partly within the United Kingdom. When that is impossible, the maximum offset should be obtained. Against that background, it is no surprise that since the mid-1980s the Labour party has been a supporter of the purchase of the Westland helicopter known as the EH101.

To that extent, the Opposition welcome the Ministry of Defence's decision in March to purchase 22 of those helicopters. We remain critical, however, that there was an eight-year delay in the placement of the order. There is no doubt that that delay lost us valuable export orders. I think especially of the Dutch contract for the Dutch forces. It might be that our Minister with procurement responsibilities had a word in the ear of his Dutch counterpart and thereafter the Dutch bought the French equivalent. There is no doubt that Westland is important if we are to retain a helicopter industry in the United Kingdom and that the industry must be kept at Yeovil.

The Minister has talked about the Hercules replacement. The Labour party was of the opinion that the future large aircraft project should be given an opportunity to enter the market. It therefore welcomes the decision that was announced in January by the Government that they will rejoin the FLA project after the completion of the feasibility studies. That means in reality, however, that the Government are admitting that they were wrong to pull out in the first instance.

These criticisms are nothing compared with our condemnation of the Government's handling of the Eurofighter 2000 and the Tornado mid-life update contracts. The Labour party has supported the Eurofighter project since its inception, and it will continue to do so. Unfortunately, there has been a sorry tale of delay and overspend. The EF is now two years behind schedule and remains dogged by difficulties. In February, it was estimated that the total cost of the aircraft would be £14.9 billion. In real terms, the cost of development has increased by a projected £2.2 billion. If the cost of the aircraft increases when it is in production, overall costs will be even higher. We could buy many district general hospitals for £2.2 billion. With that amount, the RAF hospital could be kept open for about 1,000 years, or longer. I am much involved with the west coast main railway line. We could upgrade that line from Carlisle to Glasgow and back again—not that there would be any need to go back—for £2.2 billion. There has been a waste of £2.2 billion because the Government cannot control costs.

**Mr. Bill Walker:** The hon. Gentleman said earlier that the RAF had been cut too much and that more money needed to be spent on it. Anyone reading a report of what he has just said would have the impression that a future Labour Government, if one were ever to exist, would not pursue the Eurofighter 2000 purchase.

**Mr. Martlew:** I am sorry if I did not explain myself sufficiently clearly. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman was not listening attentively.

Spending on the RAF would not have needed to be cut if there had not been excess expenditure of £2.2 billion. As I have said, the Labour party has supported the Eurofighter since its inception. It does not, however, support the extravagance that is now to be seen.

**Lady Olga Maitland:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Martlew:** I am sorry, no. I have already given way to the hon. Lady.

The Eurofighter is two years behind schedule and it is already £2.2 billion over budget, and that figure is likely to increase. At least the aircraft flew in April 1994, which we welcomed. This is a key year for the Eurofighter because the development phase is largely completed and the four nations involved in the consortium must now sign an production agreement.

The aircraft has come under particular criticism by the Germans. There have been problems between the contractors and the German Government. I hope that they have been resolved. As I have said, we are coming to the point when the contract must be signed for the production run.

It was argued initially that the industries involved would obtain work on a percentage of the aeroplanes built. The Germans decided originally that they wanted 250. They have now decided that they want only 140. The Italians have reduced their take of new aeroplanes from 165 to 120, and the Spanish from 100 to 87. Meanwhile, we have maintained our commitment—I do not object to this—to 250. Those figures should allow British industry to undertake 40 per cent. of the production work on the Eurofighter. I am sure that nobody would disagree with that.

I read in the *Financial Times* last month, however, that the Government of Germany were threatening to pull out of the scheme if they did not get 33 per cent. of the production work. I hope that in his winding-up speech the Minister will say that the British Government will stick with the original agreement. If the German Government want more work, they must order more aeroplanes. We should stick with the 40 per cent. for which we originally signed. I do not think that Ministers can take any credit for such a fiasco, although I accept that neither the Minister of State for Defence Procurement nor the Minister of State for the Armed Forces were in post when most of the money was wasted.

The Tornado mid-life update is yet another example of the Government's failure to extract value for money or, indeed, get projects delivered on time. The National Audit Office subjected the project to severe criticism and pointed out that the original in-service date for the aircraft was 1993 and that the estimated cost was £540 million. The Minister of State for Defence Procurement said that it was a great project costing £700 million. It should not have cost that. It should have cost only £540 million. Indeed, many of us suspect that there will be at least a £270 million overspend on the project and that it will be five years late. It is another example of how the Government have wasted money in the MOD. No wonder the Ministry of Defence is known throughout the Government and the country as the Ministry of waste.

*[Mr. Martlew]*

As I said, present Ministers cannot take all the credit. The former Minister of State for Defence Procurement, the right hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken), has been promoted to the Cabinet as Chief Secretary to the Treasury. The man responsible for the highest overspend in any project is now second in command at the Treasury. It beggars belief.

I accept that the Royal Air Force had to reorganise after the cold war—perhaps the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam does not, but most of us accept that there had to be some change. The reorganisation under "Options for Change" reduced the strength of the RAF from 90,000 personnel—what it should have been—to 75,000 by this year. It meant that we lost 14 squadrons and our front-line jet combat strength was reduced by a third. Overall, the number of air bases in the United Kingdom and Germany was reduced by 23. Then, in July 1993, the Government panicked. They needed to save £750 million and they therefore cut another Tornado squadron. The defence costs study means that by the end of the decade, RAF personnel numbers will have dropped from about 90,000 to about 50,000—nearly a cut of 50 per cent.

**Lady Olga Maitland:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for finally giving way. Perhaps it is even more appropriate for him to give way now than it was earlier. We are hearing of the concern about so-called cuts; what I would call value for money. Will he explain a little how he equates his concern about the size of our armed forces with a statement made by his hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) to the Royal United Services Institute? I have a copy of the hon. Gentleman's speech, in which he said that he welcomed an opportunity to reduce defence spending. How does that equate with the hon. Gentleman's concern about the size of our armed forces?

**Mr. Martlew:** I do not think that my hon. Friend quoted a figure of 30 per cent., as has the Minister, who welcomed the opportunity. When I asked the hon. Lady in a recent debate whether she would increase spending in the armed forces, she said that she would only if there were growth in the economy. Despite that answer and the growth in the economy, she is going to vote for the defence estimates and for the slashing of the defence budget by £1.5 billion. Her arguments are not credible at all.

Numbers in the RAF have been cut by almost a half. Such decline is not easy to manage, and we accept that, but the crass way in which in the Government have done it is beyond belief. The repercussions of the decision to issue compulsory redundancy notices to service personnel who were on active service went way beyond the individuals concerned. Whenever I go to a base or an Army camp, I am reminded that the Government sent redundancy notices to people on active service in Northern Ireland and Bosnia.

The other drastic blow to morale, especially of the RAF, came when the Secretary of State—I am sorry that he is not in his place—demanded, in essence, the resignation of Sir Sandy Wilson, the second most senior officer in the Royal Air Force. That demand followed allegations of unauthorised spending on official residences. We in Parliament cannot tell whether that action was justified. A report was produced by KPMG Peat Marwick—it cost us £100,000 and we were only investigating an overspend of £380,000—but the Government censored it; they would not make it public to Members of Parliament or anyone else. No official announcement was made.

My hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) accused the Secretary of State of fleeing the capital on the day that the news came out. Not only did the Secretary of State flee the capital that day but the following week he fled the country and went to Poland. It was a disgrace that the character of one of our finest officers was besmirched in such a way without the Secretary of State coming to the Dispatch Box to explain why.

**Mr. Hardy:** Does my hon. Friend agree that the record was put a little straight, because, a few days after the Secretary of State had expressed no confidence in Air Chief Marshal Sir Sandy Wilson, the Minister of State for the Armed Forces, in reply to a debate secured by his hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown), paid a deserved and full tribute to Sir Sandy? The record needs to be further clarified, so I hope that my hon. Friend's questions will be answered in full.

**Mr. Martlew:** I attended that debate and I agree with my hon. Friend. It is a pity that the MOD seemed to keep on leaking to the press the information that the Secretary of State had no confidence in Sir Sandy—

**Mr. Soames** *rose—*

**Mr. Martlew:** In a minute.

**Mr. Soames:** On that point.

**Mr. Martlew:** I wish to finish this point.

**Mr. Soames:** We had a very serious—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris):** Order. The hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) is not giving way. The Minister should wait until the hon. Member gives way.

**Mr. Martlew:** I am sorry for that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When the Minister replies to that point—he will have the chance to reply at the end of the debate—will he tell us who was the major budget holder for that official residence? Was it Sir Sandy? We understand that it was not. I do not wish to go into the matter any further because I understand that hon. Members of all parties will be touching on the issue.

There has been rapid change in the RAF. Morale is low, yet rapid change is to continue. The Minister announced that there will be compulsory redundancies, and we know that that will also affect morale. I must touch on one report, "Managing People in Tomorrow's Armed Forces", which was published in March, following discussions chaired by Mr. Michael Bett. The Bett report contained many good things. I used to be interested in personnel, so I read the report thoroughly and it contains ideas which would improve the efficiency and morale of the forces. However, one item is generating tremendous opposition, if not disbelief, in the forces—the proposal to introduce performance-related pay. That proposal is nonsense. It cuts across the ethos of our armed forces of teamwork, comradeship and sacrifice. That ethos has served our armed forces, and therefore our country, well over the centuries.

How can we measure performance when it is a matter of life and death? Will our pilots be braver or better in combat if they think that they are going to receive a bonus? Do the Government really believe that, in this country at the present time, the love of money is greater than the love of country?

The chief constable of Hampshire recently highlighted the point, and his comments could apply to any of the uniformed forces, when he said:

"I joined the force out of a sense of public service . . . recognising the financial disadvantage. Had I wanted the principles of the market-place, I would not have made that decision . . . The notion that I will work harder or more effectively because of performance related pay is absurd and objectionable, if not insulting."

My advice to the Minister is to cherry-pick the Bett report. I am aware that the chairman of the report said that it should not be cherry-picked, but that was arrogance on his behalf. I would leave the particular cherry of performance-related pay to rot on the tree. Please do not try to run our armed forces like Barings bank.

The Labour party is committed to the strong defence of the nation. Where this Government pursue a policy on strong defence, the Labour party will support them. However, when we do not support them, we will be constructively critical, as we have been today. I am sure that Conservatives will take the same line when there is a Labour Government in the not-too-distant future.

We do not wish to play politics with the defence of this nation or with our armed forces. It is in that spirit that we remember the sacrifices that were made 50 years ago. People in England and Wales today are taking the opportunity to vote. That option would have been denied them if we had lost the war and had lost to fascism. I hope that those who are eligible to vote will do so. Even those who do not take that opportunity have it because of the sacrifices made 50 years ago.

5.32 pm

**Sir John Cope** (Northavon): I want to make two points about the RAF—a large point and a small point.

First, it is appropriate to support the tribute paid by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement to the RAF for its service during the second world war. My right hon. Friend said that 55 was an important age in that respect. I happen to be rather above that age. I was about eight when the war ended so I have no first-hand reminiscences of horror or fighting, but I remember sleeping in a shelter and the fact that the string on one's gas mask pulled into one's shoulder on the way to school. I recall the occasional thrill of seeing aircraft passing overhead with the three yellow bands which were on them at the time.

My right hon. Friend the Minister was right to pay a great tribute to the RAF for its part in the second world war and in a series of actions since. I was particularly pleased that the hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) mentioned Northern Ireland, of which I have particular experience and where the RAF has been extremely valuable.

I strongly support the remarks that my right hon. Friend the Minister made at the end of his speech about the defence industrial base. He made a welcome statement and some very good points that back up what he and his colleagues have done recently in the Ministry of Defence.

Strong defence industries are just as important to the defence of our country and our freedoms as strong armed forces. My constituency interest is in the airframes, aero-engines and missiles of British Aerospace and Rolls-Royce. I think of the defence industries mainly with regard to RAF procurement rather than that of the Army or Navy, although my point is not a single service one.

I do not mean simply that it is a good idea to have one's own reliable domestic suppliers in times of war. There are clearly times when that is of the greatest importance, and the incident with Belgian ammunition not so long ago reminded us that gratitude for past services cannot always be relied on. I served in a Territorial Army regiment that had collectively been awarded the Belgian Croix de Guerre during the liberation of Brussels, but I shall let that pass.

It is important that our great companies flourish and many of our most important exporting companies are in defence and related areas, including those to which I have referred. They are profoundly affected by MOD procurement decisions. That is why I welcome Defence Ministers' renewed emphasis on industrial arguments when taking procurement decisions. In particular, I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Minister of State on showing appreciation of the importance of the defence industrial base in the future large aircraft decision last December and his attitude to the FLA since, which he expressed again earlier. I also congratulate him on the support helicopter decision, which was taken more recently.

It is very important that our industrial interests are taken into account for economic and employment reasons. Expressed crudely, if we cannot compete in the world marketplace with our industries and great companies, we will not be able to defend ourselves. Poor countries are bullied and lose wars. That is a very important aspect of this part of the debate.

Every important project is now international, as my right hon. Friend the Minister of State said. United Kingdom Government procurement is not enough to provide the basis for modern aircraft. That is why our defence industrial base depends on exports as well as on sales to the MOD.

My right hon. Friend the Minister of State referred to the Defence and Trade and Industry Select Committees, which are considering the issue at the moment. I welcome the involvement of the DTI as well as the MOD in defence procurement decisions. I hope that as a result of the Select Committee reports and of what flows from them we shall see increased and earlier involvement of the DTI in major defence procurement decisions.

I am sorry to see a reduction of the funding percentage for technology demonstrators. Like the Public Accounts Committee, I believe that technology demonstrators can save money. The Government should take that into account. They should also involve suppliers earlier and more deeply in procurement decisions so as to reduce costs, just as major companies are doing with their suppliers. The Japanese have taught us a lot about how to treat one's suppliers and how to get the best value for money by involving suppliers early. The MOD needs to apply those lessons, just as the great companies are applying them.

The defence industrial base is an important part of our economy and that, in itself, is vital for our freedom. I realise that my right hon. Friend the Minister of State knows all this and that he said it in his speech. In a sense,

*[Sir John Cope]*

I am directing my comments not to him but to ensuring that everyone in the MOD and the armed forces appreciates the strong emphasis that my right hon. Friend and his colleagues have placed on their defence procurement decisions. After all, the 1939-45 war—especially in Europe but also in the far east—was a struggle that was measured not only by the undoubted bravery of the armed forces on all sides but by the industrial might of Germany on the one hand and the allies on the other. In a sense, that is part of the lesson of that war, as of many wars in the past.

I said that I wanted to make two points and the small one relates to the university air squadrons. My right hon. Friend the Minister paid tribute to both university air squadrons and, in the same sentence, to the Air Cadet Force which, I know, is also supported by my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker). However, I make a clear distinction between the two.

The Air Cadet Force is extremely important and I agree with what was said about it but, as they are organised at present—I emphasise the latter two words—the university air squadrons, and especially their flying training arrangements, are a shocking waste of money. I realise that, in RAF terms, it is not a great deal of money. We have been talking about billions of pounds but the cost of the university air squadrons is not in that bracket. However, that is no excuse for waste.

My attention was drawn to the matter when Bristol university air squadron moved into Colerne airfield in my part of the country without warning my constituents, but that was because of an error. The airfield is in the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Member for Wiltshire, North (Mr. Needham), our excellent Minister for Trade, but the airfield boundary is also the constituency boundary and the aircraft take off over some of my constituents and an important international school that is located there. The airfield was disused for many years and was supposed to be safeguarded for future use. The local authority did not know that, but that is a different matter. In fact, the issue will probably finish up in court, but I shall not dwell on that aspect.

Such events made me look carefully at the university air squadrons and their financing. They are said to have cost £11.9 million in 1993-94 and much the same in 1994-95. I doubt whether that includes the capital and other costs of keeping airfields such as Colerne open for their use. Colerne covers an enormous acreage with substantial buildings. It was previously disused and presumably could have been sold. I shall deal, however, only with the £11.9 million.

The total establishment of the university air squadrons across the country is said to be 725 students, although a parliamentary answer last week stated that there were 801 students at present. Using the higher figure, the cost per student per year is about £15,000.

**Mr. Bill Walker:** As a former Treasury Minister, my right hon. Friend will understand that some of the costs charged to the university air squadrons cover the amortised cost of, for example, instructors. The instructors are carrying out Royal Air Force duties while instructing, and it is essential that they keep in current instructional flying practice. In other words, some of the costs would have to be transferred elsewhere.

**Sir John Cope:** That may be so, but there are many such costs. In any case, my hon. Friend's argument depends on precisely what other duties those people went on to perform or whether they are being retained by the RAF for those duties, which I understand they are in some cases.

The justification for the existence of the university air squadrons is apparently twofold. First, it is said that they are necessary for recruiting and, secondly, that they give students initial flying training. Neither reason stands up to scrutiny. Bristol university air squadron has a total of 48 members and a small proportion of them—five to be precise—are already acting pilot officers, being paid a salary and attending university at the same time. They have, in a very real sense, already been recruited. Twelve have RAF bursaries and some, but not all, of them will go into the RAF. However, the RAF does not want them all. The majority—31 out of 48 at Bristol—are not wanted by the RAF and will not be in future, but they are also trained to fly at an average cost of £15,000 a year for three years. Even if one thinks that the acting pilot officers and bursary students would not have joined the RAF unless the university air squadrons existed, it is still very expensive recruiting.

Across the country, 57 former university air squadron students joined the RAF for pilot training last year. Therefore, when regarded as an incentive to recruiting, the university air squadrons cost £209,000 per recruit, which is a vast sum.

The other so-called reason for the existence of the university air squadrons is that they give initial pilot training to people entering the RAF, but it is very expensive training. I inquired about private flying tuition. It seems that similar training could be bought by the hour for about £3,200 per student per year.

**Mr. Hardy:** The right hon. Gentleman should understand that training air crew for the Royal Air Force is very different from training pilots to fly either their own aircraft or civil aircraft. Does he not realise that pilots and other air crew in the Air Force have to be trained not merely to carry out their air crew duties but to do so in a very hostile environment? If one separates training from the service itself, as the Air Force is tending to do under this Government, the ethos of the service, which might generate a willingness to fly in a hostile environment, might disappear.

**Sir John Cope:** I do not entirely agree. It is of course true that some of the later stages of training, not conducted by the university air squadrons, are very different in character from civilian flying training but the initial training is not that different, and certainly not different enough to justify such high costs. Indeed, as the hon. Gentleman said, the Ministry of Defence has already recognised that point.

If all the 801 members of the university air squadrons were trained by civilian flying schools, the cost would come down from £12 million to £2.5 million. If, on the other hand, private tuition was used for only the 57 students who actually joined the RAF for later pilot training, the cost would be about £182,000 rather than £11.9 million. That is a tremendous difference.

**Mr. Wilkinson:** Will my right hon. Friend acknowledge that there are real benefits in the university air squadron system in that it is an invaluable point of

contact between the Royal Air Force and the university community as a whole? There is little enough contact between the services and civilians today but the university air squadrons enable undergraduates to get a taste of service life and what is entailed in flying in the Royal Air Force. In view of the grading aspect of the flying training that they undertake, that would tend to attract some people who might not otherwise join the service but it might also dissuade some people from entering the Royal Air Force. Once people have entered proper flying training in the Royal Air Force, it costs a great deal to wash them out. It might be better that that happens at university rather than when they have put on the uniform.

**Sir John Cope:** There is something in that, and my hon. Friend clearly speaks from experience, especially of the Royal Air Force. I am not suggesting that the university air squadrons should be abolished. What I am asking for, and what I understand is taking place, is a careful review, following on from the excellent document "Front Line First", of the way in which flying training is conducted in these circumstances. I believe that any rational review would lead to changes in the flying training conducted by university air squadrons. That, I agree, would change the character of the squadrons as we now know them, and that is what I am seeking to achieve. They seem to me to be a wasteful way to achieve the desirable results to which my hon. Friend draws attention.

We have every reason to be grateful to the Royal Air Force. My criticism of that one very minor matter does not mean that I do not support it and its work very strongly. In fact, I very much appreciate the work of all our armed forces, including the Royal Air Force.

5.49 pm

**Mr. Martin Redmond** (Don Valley): I am extremely grateful for the opportunity to say a few words. The right hon. Member for Northavon (Sir J. Cope) complained about the string on the gas mask making a mark on his neck. He was very fortunate; we were too poor to own one. I am quietly confident that, had the present Government been in power, they would have privatised the distribution of gas masks.

**Mr. Soames:** I know that times are pretty rough in Yorkshire, but, actually, people used to be given gas masks. They did not have to buy them.

**Mr. Redmond:** We still cannot afford to buy them because of the high unemployment in south Yorkshire. I am quietly confident that, if the Minister of State for the Armed Forces is feeling compassionate, he will reconsider the closure of RAF Finningley.

The right hon. Member for Northavon mentioned the Air Cadet Force, which has a valuable role to play. Regrettably, with the planned closure, there must be a big question mark over RAF Finningley. One hopes that, even at this late stage, the Minister will look at matters logically and reasonably, come to a different conclusion and keep RAF Finningley open.

Actions speak louder than words. We have heard certain words from the Minister of State for Defence Procurement and certain quotations from newspapers. The Minister emphasised what the papers said. He cannot have his cake and eat it too. When I challenged the right hon. Gentleman on what was printed in the paper regarding RAF Finningley, he told me not to believe everything that I read in the newspaper. One either believes or disbelieves what one reads in the newspaper. I am surprised that the Minister, with his vast experience, did not see fit to check whether the newspaper report was accurate.

We have had problems for centuries regarding the pacifist attitude of people in power, who have deliberately refused to spend money on keeping the nation's defences adequately built. Unfortunately, we have suffered a loss. I regret to say that men have been slaughtered needlessly throughout the centuries. We have seen the pictures of first world war troops going over the top of the trenches and being slaughtered. In the second world war, men were slaughtered needlessly before we had a good fighting machine.

Yesterday's edition of the *Evening Standard* referred to the Spitfire. It was a marvellous aircraft, which certainly helped to turn the tide against Nazi Germany. VE day, which we will celebrate at the weekend, came about because people took the opportunity of making sure that the war effort was geared up to meet the challenge from Germany.

We need to be consistent in what we say and do. I cannot accept that what has been said meets the requirements of the future. One of the necessary defence ingredients is training. We must have first-class training, equipment and manpower. Over the centuries, Britain's service manpower has been the best in the world. Unfortunately, the forces have not always had the best equipment or best leadership. If we slip up on any of those ingredients, we shall put the defence of the nation at risk. I gather from the Government's conclusions that they are overstretching the armed forces to a dangerous level. I hope that, even at this late stage, they will reflect on what the country requires. We must have a surplus of manpower, planes or whatever, and I am sure that the Minister is aware of that.

The Government's response mentions overseas training. I remind the House that political parties and Governments in other countries change from time to time. Although we are welcomed now, we might not be welcomed in future. If the Government reduce or risk training facilities, they will not be doing the job that they were given.

The closures of RAF Finningley and RAF Scampton obviously place training facilities at risk. I raised that point with the Minister of State, and I was told that the RAF's airfield needs were stretched to the limit and that, if it required over and above the limit, it would commandeer private airfields to meet training requirements. The Government just cannot turn things on and off with the stroke of a pen. Training is important, but by trimming or privatising certain sections of the RAF, the Government are placing a greater onus on the personnel who remain. RAF Finningley is an example of that, small though it was. Military personnel were required for guard duty over and above their normal duties. That has placed a burden on the lads and it is causing stress and strain that RAF people can do without. That is only one small example of the extra burden that the remaining lads must endure as a result of the Government's policy.

We learn, reading *The Guardian*, that the Secretary of State will have a great big worldwide role for our military personnel. If that is the case, will we complete the task with the reduction that is now taking place? I doubt whether logic can provide an answer. Bearing in mind the

*[Mr. Redmond]*

privatisation that has been hinted at, there is obviously a major problem. I cannot accept that privatisation would lead to any benefit. Things still have to be paid for. There is a big question mark about the wisdom of the major privatisation schemes in the lifetime of the Government since 1979. They have not served the best interests of the people of this country.

One wonders how the decision to close RAF Finningley was reached. We met the Minister about 12 months beforehand to talk about joint use, whereby the private sector and the military section could complement one another and help to defer some of the costs of the station. It appears that our words fell on stony ground. Certainly the defence team was not keen to accept our suggestion.

Just before Christmas, we met the Minister of State for the Armed Forces and got a better response, but he said that a whole consultation process was taking place, so he could not comment. I cannot speak for the other establishments affected, but will the Minister provide me with a list of the parties and organisations that were consulted during that process? A few were consulted, but beyond that I am not sure. No doubt the Minister will give me a full list.

Several questions arise from the closure of RAF Finningley. The cuts stemmed from a Treasury initiative designed to make savings so that the Government could meet the requirement for tax cuts at the next general election. Or perhaps the military chiefs have done a double shuffle and suggested the closure of Finningley and other establishments, saying, "That is where the savings will be made; that will meet your requirements."

I am not sure who is kidding whom here. The closure of Finningley will not save money for the Government. When people are thrown on the dole and the number of jobs is reduced, other Departments have to pick up the bill. One needs to look at the broad picture. With all due respect, I do not think that the situation has been considered in a global sense.

As regards the military aspect, Ministers say that the resources can be provided at other stations. I shall talk about that later, but when we move equipment, personnel and extra duties to other stations, it is not simply a question of moving them out and then in. One has to provide the equipment to accompany such a move, and that costs money. I do not believe that the figures that we have been given reveal the true costs. There are all sorts of questions about the true cost of the cuts. All that we can say with any truth or sincerity is that there is a dramatic reduction in the RAF's strike capacity.

Since aircraft were invented, they have played an important role in winning victories for this country, whether they were the old biplanes in the first world war, the Spitfires in the second world war, or latterly our aircraft in the Gulf. Those wars proved that the RAF could damage the enemy without great loss of life in the ground forces—a softening-up process. Regrettably, the RAF suffered some casualties, but had it not been there to soften up the opposition, there would have been enormous casualties among the ground forces. The reductions now taking place in the RAF bring our capacity to do that in future into question.

I hope that the defence team will have a different approach. There is an old saying that someone could not organise a pee-up in a brewery, and that may be true, but the situation is too serious not to consider it in depth. On 29 September last year, we had a letter from the Government saying:

"our primary concern must be to ensure the best use of defence resources".

If we have not sufficient resources, there is a problem, and I hope that, even at this late stage, Ministers will have the guts to tell the Treasury that what is being proposed is not acceptable. We must have an adequate force—indeed, the best equipped force in the world—and we can have that only if we are prepared to put our money where our mouth is.

I do not think that any long-term planning has gone into the suggested cuts, so I hope that the suggested closure of RAF Finningley will be reviewed and that the station will stay open. As the Minister knows, I have tabled many questions and written many letters to him on the subject. Those have not been answered adequately, because all the answers took the form of broad-brush evasion. Apparently there is to be a compromise—a bit of this and a bit of that, and a little bit of a package.

Perhaps Ministers think that they may not be around when the decision takes effect. Certainly the Labour Government will have the huge responsibility of ensuring that there is a well equipped and trained force adequate for this country's defence needs.

I ask the Minister to give serious consideration to what is proposed in the White Paper. I am sorry to have to keep emphasising that, but there appears to be neither logic nor reason behind the reductions. I hope that when he has thought about all the questions asked by hon. Members on both sides of the House, the Minister will seriously consider delaying any action until we have had a thorough look at the implications for this country and for our forces, which will be so desperately needed in the 21st century.

6.8 pm

**Mr. Neville Trotter** (Tynemouth): Sadly, my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor), who so effectively chairs the Defence Select Committee and plays so valuable a part in our debates on the services, cannot be with us today because of a family bereavement. But I am pleased to see the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) in his seat, because he too plays a valuable role in the Committee's affairs. Most of the members of the Select Committee are in Italy today, on a visit that was arranged some time ago. They are in fact talking to members of the Italian air force today, having talked to the NATO commanders over the past few days.

The Committee is especially concerned about the instability on the southern flank of NATO, which includes the turbulent areas of north Africa, the former Yugoslavia and the republics of the former Soviet Union. The Committee has made regular visits to the British forces in Bosnia—this country's participation there includes, of course, extensive RAF involvement. I met the RAF contingent at Aviano air base in northern Italy during the Easter recess, and I found them to be full of professionalism and enthusiasm as always. I shall return to the RAF's substantial involvement in operations in Bosnia and elsewhere overseas.

The Committee will soon be visiting the Jaguars and Tornados at Lossiemouth and the principal Nimrod base at Kinloss. Later in the year the Committee will be visiting the Harrier force deployed to Turkey to undertake operations in northern Iraq.

It is fitting that the debate today is on the very eve of the celebrations to commemorate VE day, 50 years ago. In the second world war, the men and women of the RAF played a vital role in every campaign through to the final liberation of Europe. It is not to decry the heroic efforts of the other services to say that, but for the RAF in the battle of Britain, the civilised world would not have survived that conflict.

The men and women of the RAF today are justly due the praise that they have been given during this debate, and they are worthy successors of those who served in the squadrons which fought in the second world war. Their numbers are far less than in 1945, but their resolve and training standards remain of the highest quality. I looked up some figures relating to the strength of the RAF at its peak in 1944. There were at that time 1 million men and women in the service, but they faced a Luftwaffe with a strength of 3 million and—as late in the war as 1944—a German aircraft industry which was producing 3,000 new aircraft a month.

We could also celebrate this weekend 50 years of peace in western Europe—the longest period in our history. The long, hard and costly slog of maintaining our massive defences against the threat to our very existence that was posed by the Soviet-led Warsaw pact has paid off, and we now see democracy throughout Europe. The RAF, in common with other western air forces, has inevitably reduced in numbers following the end of the cold war. The United States air force, for example, has reduced by 40 per cent. the number of its combat aircraft since the end of the cold war.

This is not the time to debate at length the future of central and eastern Europe, but the Committee has recently visited Russia and Ukraine. I was myself able to visit the Black sea fleet base port of Sebastopol. It was encouraging to find freedom of speech and many expressions of friendship. I was also able to visit the huge Zhukovsky aeronautical research establishment outside Moscow. A few years ago, it would have been impossible for me even to have entered the town of Zhukovsky.

We noticed some disturbing features on the political, economic and military scene in Russia. The Russian satellites in eastern Europe have been lost, and the Russian forces have been greatly run down. There have been massive cuts in the Russian air force, and pilots are flying perhaps only 40 hours a year against the recognised desirable NATO figure of 240 hours a year.

The threat of a third world war which hung over us for so many years after VE day has been removed. While we sincerely hope that Russia can overcome its massive problems, we cannot be certain that, in a few years, the problems there will not lead to a hostile Government and a renewed military threat. Certainly, we have seen a great increase in instability elsewhere in the world since the end of the cold war.

It is impossible to be sure what challenge Britain and our forces will face. All that is certain is that there will be a challenge, but we can be equally sure that the RAF will respond with its customary efficiency and professionalism. While the reduction in size of the RAF was inevitable following the end of the cold war, we are right to continue to spend £60 million a day on defence. That is an interesting and perhaps not widely appreciated figure—we are still spending £60 million a day on defence.

We must maintain the present front-line strength, while seeking to improve our capability with new technology. We heard earlier in the debate about the enormous sums of money involved in producing the new equipment which is needed. A feature of the present-day world is that many countries which could prove hostile to us in the future have sophisticated weapons that could be used against our services. That is particularly true in terms of the air defence systems which could face the RAF. The RAF must have the best possible aircraft, weapons and training.

I welcome the progress that is being made in the acquisition of new weapons systems. Today's conditions for ground attack give rise to two requirements—precision-guided weapons and those with a stand-off capability. The target should be hit on the first pass without the cost and danger of multiple attacks, and the aircraft—if at all possible—should keep a distance away from the enemy's defences.

The Committee will be following with interest the weapons procurement programme outlined in my right hon. Friend the Minister of State's opening speech today, and in yesterday's White Paper. We are certainly following closely the progress of the vital Eurofighter programme. It is interesting to reflect that the European fighter project will be bigger in financial terms than was the construction of the channel tunnel. It is a project of enormous size, and of the greatest importance to the future of the RAF.

The Committee will be looking at the possible alternatives for the RAF's future maritime patrol aircraft, a role that has been successfully pursued for 25 years by the Nimrod force. We now need improved avionics to cope with the more sophisticated submarines with which the RAF may have to contend in the future. The only three suitable airframes that are likely to be available are the same three as competed originally some 30 years ago when the Nimrod was chosen. When the Committee visits Kinloss in a few weeks' time, it will be interesting to hear the views of the Nimrod crews on what they would like to see as a replacement. I suspect that we shall end up by rebuilding the Nimrods and fitting them with new avionics.

I welcome the decision at last to order helicopters, and the mix of the Chinook and the EH101 seems to be a good solution to a problem which has been agonised over for far too long. Will my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement mention to my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces, who will reply to the debate, my concern at the recent crash of a 101? Can my hon. Friend assure me that that will not affect the programme for the introduction into service of this valuable machine? We are also waiting for some response on the causes of the tragic Chinook crash more than a year ago. I do not believe that a report on that crash has yet been published. Can my hon. Friend state when that report is likely to be published?

I would like to refer to the attack helicopter which, although primarily an Army matter, is of importance to all of us who are concerned about our air defence forces. It is important that a decision is taken speedily on that project. I mention the word Apache, as that seems likely to be the best of the machines competing to become our attack helicopter.

**Mr. Freeman:** My hon. Friend and the House may find it helpful if I state briefly that we intend to try to reach a decision before the House rises for the summer recess, and that the competition will be for an attack helicopter.

*[Mr. Freeman]*

The hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) referred to a Dutch decision for an attack helicopter, not a utility support helicopter.

The competition will be on the basis of value for money, and we will not be influenced by arguments about being good Europeans or good Atlanticists. The decision will be taken purely on the basis of operational effectiveness and value for money.

**Mr. Trotter:** That was a reassuring comment from my right hon. Friend. May I refer to the order for C130J Hercules aircraft, and say how much I welcome the decision that we are also staying in the future light aircraft development project? In this way, a sensible solution has been found to the problem of replacing the ageing Hercules.

I referred earlier to the need for our force to be well trained, as well as well equipped. Modern air warfare requires constant practice of low-level flying. The Committee has reported on the matter since the previous RAF debate in the House, and I refer to a number of the issues raised in that report. It is obviously important that as much operational low-level flying as possible is carried out overseas, and the sophisticated ranges in the USA and at Cold lake in Canada are very valuable in that respect. A significant number of low-level flights have also taken place at Goose bay in Labrador for many years, and we have been told that the agreement with the Canadian Government was to be renegotiated. Can we be told whether that has happened?

The Committee was told that discussions were to be held about possible low-level flying by the RAF in Morocco and in the countries of central and eastern Europe. I can see something of a problem in both Morocco and in the countries of central and eastern Europe with regard to ranges. We would either have to incur the cost of installing them, or we would have the inconvenience of taking large equipment in and out when we exercised in the area.

The Committee was keen to see the introduction as soon as possible of ALFENS. For those who are not familiar with the alphabet soup of military technology, that stands for automated low flying enquiry and notification system. We were told, in the Government's response to our report, that ALFENS would be in service by 1995 and it is a valuable asset, as it should increase the safety of low flying. Can we be told the current position? The Committee was also told that jet low-level flying would be reduced by 30 per cent. by the end of 1994. Has that target been achieved?

More RAF aircraft are now deployed on operations overseas than have been for 30 years—mostly for Iraq and Bosnian operations. Every front-line type in service is involved. Those detachments are now on such an on-going basis that they are not merely month after month, but year after year. Those constant operations on a major scale prove the competence and ability of the service, but also affect the people in it. While they are enthusiastically responding to the challenge, as we have seen on our visits, we must not overlook the effect of the separation on their normal family lives.

For the air crew, while the detachments involve much flying, it is often not in conditions that provide good combat training. When they return home, they are thus faced with the need for intensive combat-related flying, which often requires that they go overseas again to train on the ranges in north America, Sardinia or Cyprus. That has a knock-on effect on the time that they are away from their families.

Inevitably, the service has been faced with a period of great change following the end of the cold war. Clearly, a long period of stability is now needed and I welcome the comments to that effect in the White Paper that was issued yesterday. That is the No. 1 requirement for the service.

This is not the time to debate the recent report by Mr. Bett and his team, but there must be full consultation with the services on his numerous proposals. As the hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Marhew) said, Mr. Bett stated that there should not be any cherry picking, but I think that there will have to be some. I think what Bett meant was that there should not be any financial cherry picking—it is important that there should be no financial disadvantage to the service as a result of implementing only some of his proposals—but I am not sure that all 150 of the recommendations can be accepted. I am sure that Bett's intentions are wholly worthy. He seeks to provide the best possible career for the men and women of the services into the next century and he recognises that the operational needs of the service inevitably involve a conflict between the need for mobility, which requires personnel to go anywhere at very short notice, and the natural wish of service men and women for a stable family life. Any changes that come about as a result of the report must do so with the genuine agreement and support of the services, represented by their leaders and after the fullest possible consultation with the men and women in the service.

Tomorrow, when we look back with pride on the achievements of those who served in the second world war, many of whom will be with us in Westminster Hall in the morning, we can take equal pride in the present generation who are serving so effectively in the Royal Air Force today. We can be sure that, whatever the challenges, the service will remain committed to the professionalism and excellence that it has shown throughout its 77 years of existence, which make it a standard-setter for the rest of the world. The men and women of the service are rightly proud of their achievements, they bring great credit to our country and, as a nation, they give us great cause to be proud of them.

6.22 pm

**Mr. Menzies Campbell** (Fife, North-East): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter), with whom I share membership of the Select Committee on Defence. In so far as he reflected on the conclusions and reports of that Committee, I need do no more than wholeheartedly endorse much of what he said.

I recently heard a senior officer of the Royal Air Force say:

"The Royal Air Force has had a bad year."

Having had the opportunity to reflect on that observation, I understand why it was made, but it is an unduly pessimistic response to some of the events of the past 12 months. One might say that, in the 76 years of its existence, the past year was not the best politically, but it certainly could not be said that it was a bad year operationally. But I will deal with some of those issues in a moment.

At this stage, some fleeting reference to the report issued this week by Sir Peter Cazalet would be right. I must repeat what I said when the report was issued—it is entirely sensible, and provides a proper balance of understanding between the place for entertainment in the armed services and the public's perfectly reasonable expectation that there will not be undue extravagance. As someone who has had the opportunity—indeed, the pleasure—of experiencing hospitality in some of the service residences to which the report refers, I can certainly say that, while it has been adequate, I have never seen any examples of extravagance.

When the report appeared, some people described it, rather dismissively, as a whitewash. Those who did so had either not read the report properly, or did not understand the significance of what they were reading. Suffice it to say that I hope that that issue, which has been prompted to some extent by the experience of the Royal Air Force, will now be put properly to one side and not allowed to deflect a mood, in the House and in the country, of determination to acknowledge that the ceremonies that we are about to experience during the next two or three days are possible only because of the skill and courage of the Royal Air Force throughout the second world war.

When the Minister of State for Defence Procurement put such matters in context at the beginning of the debate, he referred to the primary role of the defence of the United Kingdom and, quite rightly, to the role of Coastal Command, which often does not attract the sort of attention that it undoubtedly deserved. He also referred to the allied bombing campaign, which has become controversial. Controversial or not, however, there is no doubt that it could be carried through only because of the extraordinary determination and courage of the air crews of Bomber Command.

This being an occasion for a certain amount of nostalgia, I am conscious that, as the war came to an end, I was the victim of a substantial propaganda effort. I do not know whether the grandfather of the Minister of State for the Armed Forces was responsible, but you may remember, Mr. Deputy Speaker—I say "may" advisedly—that the legend grew that the feats of the famous "Cat's Eyes" Cunningham, who could identify German aircraft over the United Kingdom in the dark, could be attributed only to his remarkable consumption of carrots.

Every schoolboy who grew up during and just after the war was encouraged by his parents to eat as many carrots as possible—in the hope, we thought, that we would be able to emulate the famous "Cat's Eyes" Cunningham. Some time later, when the scales fell from our eyes, we realised that that great campaign had much more to do with the preponderance of carrots, compared with other vegetables, in the United Kingdom at the time, than with any eyesight-enhancing qualities that they might have.

If I might be forgiven that moment of nostalgia, I hope that I can say with some justification that the experience of all of us who have regular contact with the Royal Air Force is that the men and women—increasingly, the women—of that service display skill and courage in abundance. If we had to effect the withdrawal of the United Nations forces from Yugoslavia, let us be in no doubt that those qualities would be at a premium.

The Jaguar aircraft, which are there to provide close air support, would certainly be in use, and the importance of the Tornado F3 aircraft, which have been policing the no-fly zone, would be considerable, as would that of the TriStar tankers, AWACS aircraft, Nimrods and Hercules, which are already playing their part in the UN effort over the former Yugoslavia.

As the hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) pointed out, some four years after the conclusion of the Gulf war, we still have substantial deployments in the area—Harriers operating from bases in Turkey to police the exclusion zone over northern Iraq, as well as Tornado and reconnaissance aircraft operating from the Gulf to police the exclusion zone over southern Iraq.

As the hon. Member for Tynemouth pointed out, those are considerable burdens. It is estimated that, at any one time, the Royal Air Force has around 50 aircraft operating in support of the United Nations over Iraq and the former Yugoslavia. Those have become long-term obligations and, as a consequence, they affect personnel and equipment. As the hon. Member for Tynemouth pointed out, they also affect training and capability, because the operations do not always allow for the honing of those skills, which is a normal part of the training for flying Tornado aircraft.

We have been quick to recognise the problem of overstretch in the infantry, but we must look carefully at the risk of overstretch to the Royal Air Force. It is worth remembering, while change is still in the air, that much of "Options for Change" and "Front Line First" is still to be implemented. Bases will be closed and personnel reduced, and some of that may not be fully effective until almost the end of the century. Irrespective of what anyone does between now and then, there will then be a period of considerable change. So those who argue for a period of stability or for no more change have a considerable presumption in their favour.

I suffered a disappointment from a constituency point of view when the original decision under "Front Line First" to relocate the rescue co-ordination centre from RAF Pitreavie to RAF Leuchars in my constituency was rescinded and it was decided to send it to RAF Kinloss. However, my disappointment was nothing compared with the disappointment of the leader of the Conservative group on North East Fife district council, because the announcement was made some 48 hours before he went to the polls to try to become a member of the new unitary authority in Scotland. I expressed my disappointment in terms that could only be regarded as restrained when compared with those that he used.

In the defence White Paper published yesterday, the Secretary of State envisaged a more worldwide role for the United Kingdom forces. If by that we are to understand that the Government are willing to allow the UK forces to participate in United Nations operations, the proposal will enjoy ready support from these Benches.

But it means that the RAF may need to operate in areas that do not have modern ground facilities, host nation support or pre-existing industrial facilities. With aircraft like the Harrier, which is designed to operate from forward bases—its very flexibility is predicated on the view that it can operate a long way from ground facilities or host nation support—it is important that the level of maintenance and the availability of skills are kept at the highest level.

*[Mr. Menzies Campbell]*

The Government should answer the serious question whether the greater civilianisation of the provision of maintenance and other back-up facilities will always be adequate. Although the proposed Bill relating to reserves seeks to address that problem, what would happen if deployment were to a hostile country or a country where there is terrorism? We should think carefully about the extent to which we can impose on public opinion the notion that those who are civilians for all practical purposes but who become reserves by virtue of the operation of the legislation should be exposed to such risks.

The use of private contractors has not been without its difficulties, as experience with Airwork and the Tornado aircraft has shown. We must be careful about the lessons that we draw from our experience in the Gulf, where there was host nation support and more than adequate facilities, and where, because of the involvement of British Aerospace in Saudi Arabia, there was a substantial pre-existing industrial base. We must be careful about the extent to which we can apply what might be described crudely as "privatisation" to the provision of support services of that kind.

As the Minister showed, no debate on the RAF is ever complete without consideration of procurement issues. I welcome the fact that the issues of the Hercules replacement and the support helicopter have now been resolved. The Minister caused me some surprise as I was driving along the motorway one afternoon, listening to him being questioned on the Hercules replacement. I heard him praying in aid my support as an endorsement of the Government's decision. Although I was flattered, it is not something that one has become used to.

At the heart of the procurement discussion must rest the question of the Eurofighter 2000. Although the hon. Member for Carlisle referred to it, I wish to put a number of specific questions. I appreciate that they may not be answered today, but I should be grateful if they could be answered in due course.

Does the Government's commitment to purchase 250 aircraft still stand? Might not the Ministry of Defence, as suggested in evidence to the Defence Select Committee, be minded to purchase more than 250 Eurofighter 2000 aircraft? Is it true, as the hon. Member for Carlisle said, that the aircraft is some two years behind schedule? What are the likely consequences for the overall defence budget if the real-terms cost of the aircraft has increased by £2 billion over the 1986 estimate?

The Minister referred to the memorandum of understanding which is to be signed in relation to the production phase of the aircraft, but can he be a little more precise about when that memorandum will be signed? We all feel that no further slippage should be allowed.

An important question to which reference has already been made is: will the UK will obtain an allocation of work proportional to its order for 250 aircraft, which allocation should be of the order of 40 per cent? How seriously does the Ministry of Defence take reports that, if the German workshare falls below 43 per cent., German parliamentary approval for the production phase may be withheld? If that happened, what would be the consequences for the project? I ask those questions because the House is united in the view that that aircraft is vital to the Royal Air Force.

**Mr. Freeman:** With permission, Madam Deputy Speaker, may I briefly answer those questions? Although my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces may refer to them in winding up, it might assist the hon. and learned Gentleman to develop his argument to know that 250 aircraft is our firm commitment. We may buy more in due course.

The project has been delayed; I challenge the claim that it has been delayed for two years, but the delay is largely attributed to problems which the Germans had in reducing their order indicatively from 250 to 140. We have published the latest estimated development cost at £3.9 billion for the UK, and clearly explained the reasons for the increase. Some of it is to do with additional missiles that the aircraft must carry, but some is extra development cost, which is inevitable when developing all new aircraft.

I hope that we shall sign the memorandum of understanding on development reorientation this month, as that is essential. We have had no formal discussions with the Germans about workshare, but I agree with the hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) and the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) that it is important to start from a basis of workshare in production proportionate to the number of aircraft to which we have committed ourselves.

**Mr. Campbell:** I am grateful to the Minister for responding so comprehensively. The detailed way in which he responded to those questions shows that he is master of his brief, and I am sure that the whole House will be grateful to him for doing so. I regard the Eurofighter aircraft as absolutely vital, and that view is shared on both sides of the House.

The hon. Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) led an all-party delegation from the House to the German Parliament in 1992 to persuade our political equivalents that they should be more supportive of the project. I do not know whether we were any more successful than events might otherwise have dictated, but that experience was extremely valuable, and I hope that it had some effect.

From what I understand about the capability of the Grippen or Rafale, I suspect that if, for any reason, Eurofighter 2000 were not to proceed, we would be driven towards purchasing American equipment. As many people know, that equipment is often offered at an attractive price—to buy it off the shelf—but its through-life cost is significant. There are plenty of instances in which the Americans have offered aircraft for a cheap initial price, but have ensured that they get their pound of flesh by imposing higher costs through the life of that aircraft.

Should Eurofighter not proceed, it would have all kinds of industrial consequences, about which most hon. Members would be concerned. That serves to underline the importance we should all attach to the successful completion of the project.

The Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew), has already referred to the Tornado mid-life update, so it is unnecessary for me to say anything more about it, but, in another context, it raises questions about the procurement of weapons. I welcome the fact that a contract has been placed for Paveway.

As for the conventionally armed stand-off missile, CASOM, the Minister referred to the achievements in the Gulf. He will be aware that much of the thinking that lies behind the need to obtain CASOM arose from operational experience in the Gulf. The low-level operations carried out by British aircraft were found, after three or four days, to be too expensive in terms of the rate of attrition. As a result, it became necessary—or, to put it more fairly, the choice was made—to discontinue low-level operations, which were basically runway denial operations using the JP233.

That raises an interesting question of some technicality, upon which I do not profess to be expert, about how far the RAF now believes that it has completed its review of the low-flying tactics employed in the Gulf war. How far does it think that such tactics might be utilised on another occasion, particularly if the availability of weapons include CASOM? That technical issue is important.

A review of the kind that today's debate has occasioned would not be complete unless some effort were made to look to the future for the RAF. During the cold war, the RAF had a number of roles. Its first and perhaps primary role was the air defence of the United Kingdom over the North sea. In that regard, RAF Leuchars played, as it continues to play, a significant part. Its second role was to provide low-level counter-air offensive against Warsaw pact airfields. Its third role was its important part in the implementation of the then NATO nuclear doctrine of flexible response. Those roles are now either much reduced, or have gone.

The decision to cancel the tactical air-to-surface missile and to withdraw, by 1998, the iron bomb, the WE177, reflects the fact that the RAF, which had, along with the Royal Navy, carried the responsibility of the independent deterrent, will, after 1998, no longer have that responsibility. I do not believe that that is an argument, or that there is any other argument, to justify the conclusion of some that the RAF should cease to have a strategic role and be equipped only for a tactical support role.

There is less chance of high-intensity warfare than there was even five or 10 years ago, but we cannot eliminate that possibility. If the RAF and other services are called upon to act in the furtherance of United Nations Security Council resolutions, they must be equipped to do so. It may not be impossible to find ourselves flying against the SU-27, the Flanker, or its derivatives, if Russia is willing to sell such aircraft without regard to the behaviour, actual or potential, of purchasers.

I therefore do not think it is right for us to consider the future of the RAF without making a firm commitment that we will ensure that it retains a capability to fight high-intensity warfare should that break out.

I do not believe that we could contemplate any further reduction in funding for the RAF, without affecting its front-line strength. There is a limit to the reductions in the numbers of personnel or the contracting out of support services that can be made, because, eventually, such decisions will have an affect on what are sometimes called the "teeth". That should not stop us trying to find savings where we can without any affect on capability.

I remain unconvinced of the continuing presence, even in a limited way after 1999, of the RAF in Germany. I have heard the Minister of State for the Armed Forces argue the political case for that, but I do not believe that it is as overwhelming as the Government appear to think at the moment. If one can reduce costs, as we undoubtedly would, without affecting overall capability, surely such proposals should be given serious consideration. There is a cost in maintaining the aircraft in Germany, albeit for political purposes, in that, because of low flying restrictions, much of the air crew training cannot be done in Germany and must be done in Britain or further abroad.

I have a party interest in the RAF, but, as I have already acknowledged more than once, I also have a constituency interest, because RAF Leuchars, which is home to 43 Squadron and 111 Squadron, is based in my constituency. I therefore have the opportunity to see the RAF not only as a member of the Select Committee on Defence, but as a constituency member. Everything I see convinces me that the present generation of the RAF is a worthy successor of the traditions of the force, which we shall honour this weekend.

6.46 pm

**Mr. Bill Walker** (Tayside, North): I welcome the opportunity to speak in this important debate on the RAF. I congratulate the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) on his thoughtful and helpful speech.

As is normal on such occasions, I declare an interest. I have worn a light blue uniform, with great pleasure and pride, for more than 50 years. The RAF still kindly allows me to fly cadet aircraft. As president of air cadet gliding, I take an active and keen interest in it.

I join others in congratulating the RAF of today on its professionalism and courage. Its personnel certainly live up to everything that was achieved by their predecessors in the battle of Britain and the battles over Germany, the Atlantic, the far east and the middle east.

The hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) was way out of line when he suggested that gas masks were available only to people who could afford them. I am old enough to remember when they were available to everyone. Everyone at the public school I attended—a public school in Scotland is not quite the same as a public school in England—was issued with a gas mask.

**Mr. Hardy:** My hon. Friend the Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) will be back in the Chamber shortly, but to do him justice I should point out that he said that gas masks were given free to people at the beginning of the second world war. He felt that should similar circumstances arise under the present Administration, they would want to charge for them.

**Mr. Walker:** I should have thought that, in times of national emergency, one forgets all about differences of political opinion. That is why Clement Attlee served as deputy Prime Minister during the second world war. The gas masks were available to everyone.

I begin by expressing my deep anxiety at the short time allowed for the consideration of defence costs studies and the taking of decisions. Decisions had to be taken too quickly, and we may live to regret that. I, for one, never opposed the idea of a defence costs study operation, because I believe that every organisation must, from time to time, carefully examine the way in which it operates. I therefore realised that the results of the defence costs studies might be of great value. I repeat that I was worried only about the short timeframe. Consequently, some of

*[Mr. Walker]*

the matters that I wish to mention may have been judged differently if we had taken longer to decide and considered them more deeply.

First, I draw special attention to third line servicing. I am worried that insufficient uniformed personnel will be available for deployment in emergencies overseas—as when they were deployed in the Gulf—and to incorporate the necessary modifications that occur in circumstances such as those that arose in the Gulf, or circumstances that occurred when we had to send aircraft a long way to the southern hemisphere, to the Falkland Islands. No one can forget the way in which the in-flight refuelling modification was carried out in a remarkably short time.

Secondly, we must accept that, when we are required to participate in such operations, there is a need to increase the rate of servicing to meet increased demands imposed by the more intensive use of aircraft and equipment. I am worried that that could present problems without adequate uniformed personnel.

Thirdly, I am worried about how we sustain a capability for a long time. Operations in the Gulf lasted a relatively short time. We were fortunate that the ground war did not continue for any length of time; otherwise we may have exposed certain deficiencies in our capability. Some of those were offset by the fact that we had British Aerospace and other things available, as the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East said. Those things may not always be available.

The three problems that I have listed may be especially difficult for air transport, whether it be in the form of fixed-wing aircraft or helicopters.

I agree with the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) that, in addition, the Royal Air Force must continue to be an intelligent customer. The intelligent customer is intelligent because of the learning curve that goes with experience; the intelligent customer cannot be hoodwinked into believing that things must be done in a given way at a given cost.

I shall now comment on one or two matters that I thought that the Government did get right. I want to ensure that people do not think that I am being critical—I am not. It is inevitable that different opinions will be held about certain activities of the Ministry of Defence and the RAF.

The Government were right to buy the C130J. It was the right aircraft to carry out the job at the time that we needed it. They were also right to keep the options open for the FLA when it becomes available. I have been around long enough to know that, simply because an aeroplane is what I call a paper aeroplane, it does not necessarily fly, but I think that the FLA will fly and that it will become available.

At the time, I had strong reservations—I still have some—about the ability of the EH101 to meet the air transport demands that may be placed on the RAF. I considered that the Chinook was a better buy and had a better capability. However, the RAF must now make a decision and I have no doubt that, as it always has, it will make the mixed fleet work. Nevertheless, it could be especially vulnerable to a possible uniformed shortage in future because it will have to—as it would with the introduction of any aircraft—put the necessary infrastructure in place.

The defence costs study answer for the RAF training system can best be described as extremely high risk. It may save money now, but the cost later may be massive. Central flying school and RAF flying training units have always been centres of excellence. That has been recognised worldwide. That is why every country in the world, almost without exception, wants at some time to send people to attend Central Flying school or to be associated with our flying training operations.

The quality and ethos of that training will be at great risk as a result of the civilian programme that is envisaged. The civilian content is too great. I do not oppose the use of civilians, but I believe that quality and ethos and the gold standard that the RAF is recognised as providing worldwide may be at risk. I simply cannot envisage how the proposed structure will be capable of expansion in times of emergency.

I am deeply worried that future RAF officers who are undergoing pilot training will not see an uniformed airman for the first two years of their flying training. Fast jet pilots are much more than people who have the physical and other attributes necessary. They must also have the right attitude, and part of the attitude comes from the ethos that is developed during their flying training. My hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson), who has considerable experience of RAF flying training, knows what I am talking about. My hon. Friend and I both know something about RAF flying training and civil flying training. One does not develop that attitude in civilian flying training.

The Government's reply to the seventh report from the Defence Select Committee deals with combat readiness: It says

> "The RAF will continue to review its levels of combat readiness. These are determined by both national and NATO considerations which require the RAF to be capable of meeting, at short notice, a variety of operational commitments and contingencies."

The flying hours required are then discussed.

I would simply say to my hon. Friend the Minister that I have never been associated with the lobby that opposes low flying in Scotland. I believe that if Scotland is the only place suitable and available, it must be used, and in my constituency aircraft regularly fly low. My wife is convinced that the Walker residence is used as the turning point for all RAF sorties that go through the central highlands.

**Mr. Soames:** It probably is.

**Mr. Walker:** It probably is.

The presence of the RAF in my constituency has two faces. There is the face of the low fast jet—I am probably the only person in my constituency who will stand up and welcome it—but the other face, which is always welcome, is a yellow helicopter. There is no doubt that one of the best public relations activities with which the RAF is associated is military search and rescue.

The search and rescue capability has been stretched somewhat, and it has certainly been stretched in the past winter as a result of the vast number of people up in the mountains of Scotland. I am not opposed to large numbers of mountaineers; I am only worried that the military should be confronted with all the costs. I have always felt that other ways of absorbing the costs should be considered. That argument was made earlier by the hon. Member for Don Valley.

I have always regarded search and rescue as part of military training. I have been associated all my adult life with RAF training and with Central flying school and its activities. I cannot register deeply enough my great fears that the future of the RAF gold standard of training may be at risk.

The RAF must be congratulated on the work that it has already done in regard to manpower, before the imposition of the current demands and pressures. In particular, I congratulate Air Vice Marshal Andy Roberts: his work put the RAF well ahead of the game. I do not pretend to have read the Bett report in detail—I have not had time to do so—but, having scanned it, I am confident that the personnel side of the RAF is uniquely equipped to handle whatever the Government decide. Let me register my opposition to the idea of performance-related pay, however.

When considering manpower and structures, we must consider the impact of overstretch, and the effect of active service absence on service families. That leads me to another issue that affects families: medical services. Here again, I believe that the defence costs study has gone too far. I do not see how the tri-service structure, as envisaged, can provide adequate opportunities for specialist career appointments, training and development. Certainly service wives are very upset, as was demonstrated by the survey conducted throughout the RAF earlier this year. The likely failure of tri-service medical provision means that the 100 per cent. support that families are expected to give RAF service men may not be forthcoming in future.

On 18 October last year, I said—and I have no reason to change my mind tonight—

"Cuts in the medical services are affecting morale. Will my hon. Friend confirm that the viability of secondary medical care to the armed forces can be sustained and will he acknowledge that the sharp decline in the number of service consultant specialists brought about by the loss of career prospects will jeopardise the provision of secondary care? Will he make a statement regarding primary medical care and the need to provide adequate levels of health support to military personnel in order to return them to active service at the earliest opportunity?"

I added—and I do not apologise for repeating it now—

"I am standing here today thanks to massive benefits that I gained from RAF medical care after a serious accident."—[*Official Report*, 18 October 1994; Vol. 248, c. 203.]

In fact, it was a very serious crash. I shall never forget that those medical practitioners made it possible for me to become a Member of Parliament: I could well have been confined to a wheelchair.

Just how the medical services will cope in a Gulf-type war that may involve substantial ground casualties must be a matter of great concern to military planners. In the absence of adequate specialists, only a substantial number of reserves can meet the shortcomings. My hon. Friend the Minister will know that I am a great supporter of reserves. I am not worried about the fact that we may have to call on them; I just want to be sure that we can get them when we want them.

Again, I have had time only to scan the Cazalet report, but I believe that it vindicates the way in which armed forces entertainment has been undertaken. If the report had been available earlier, much of the ill-informed comment about senior officers' residences and entertainment—particularly those concerning Haymes Garth—would have been entirely different. As others have pointed out, Air Chief Marshal Sandy Wilson was and is a distinguished RAF officer—a man of great integrity, for whom I have a high regard. I only wish that he and his family had not suffered as a result of the actions of the press, which did what no press should ever do and attacked a serving senior officer who could not respond.

**Mr. Soames:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for what he has said. Will he also condemn the outrageous Labour slurs on senior officers, and the continuous "drip, drip, drip" effect of such criticism? It is wholly unjustified, and deeply damaging to the morale of the services. It does not only affect senior officers; it drips down through the rank structure, and is very harmful.

**Mr. Walker:** I could not agree more. My hon. Friend and I know only too well that such attacks drive a wedge between senior officers and all other ranks.

**Dr. John Reid** (Motherwell, North): I cannot let that pass. I am genuinely bemused by the Minister's allegation that slurs have been cast on senior officers: I can think of no occasion on which that has happened. Our official reaction to the report that was issued in the past couple of days—it was not shown on any television channel, as it was thought not sensational enough—was to welcome it, and to point out that we had criticised the weaknesses in institutionalised control by the MOD rather than any of the officers involved. On the one occasion when we were involved in criticism, we did not level that criticism but defended General Sir Michael Rose against criticism levelled in the House.

**Mr. Walker:** I know how the hon. Gentleman feels, but I understood my hon. Friend the Minister to be referring to what happened before the publication of the Cazalet report. Everyone will recognise that the hon. Gentleman is an honourable man, and his views on military matters are frequently not very different from mine; I do not suggest that he was responsible for the slurs. We all know, however, that substantial slurs were cast on senior serving military personnel in the newspapers and other media—assisted, sadly, by some Members of Parliament. I find that desperately sad, because senior military people can never respond to such public chastisement: they have no means of doing so.

Paragraph 12 of the Cazalet report states:

"Within the Armed Forces, official entertainment is undertaken for a variety of purposes . . . and takes two main forms. Firstly, there is the representational aspect of the provision of official hospitality for individuals from outside the Services. Certain senior commanders and other senior personnel have particular responsibilities for entertainment of this kind and occupy specially enhanced married quarters for this reason."

That is why such people have married quarters; it is not because they like to live in grand circumstances.

"Secondly, there is provision for commanders at all levels to undertake some limited entertainment of their subordinates."

Anyone who have ever run a large organisation knows the importance of entertaining key subordinates on a fairly regular basis, in circumstances in which relaxation is possible.

**Mr. Soames:** My hon. Friend is making an important point. Given his experience, he will agree that we are not discussing only the essential domestic entertaining that goes with service life—although that is fundamental—but the fact that, owing to the prestige of the British armed forces, the entertainment that they provide for, in particular, the many foreigners who come to learn from our armed

*[Mr. Soames]*

forces is part of the glue that binds the British services with so many nations across the world and helps to render them such a golden asset to the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Walker:** I could not agree with my hon. Friend more, and this debate provides an excellent opportunity to put on record our feelings about the recent ghastly treatment of the services.

Paragraph 95 of the Cazalet report states:

"My study has led me to conclude that, despite the presentation of the lifestyles of senior Service officers in some parts of the media, the level of entertainment carried out is probably about right . . . In some ways, it has been unfortunate that the spotlight has been directed in this area over the last year or so, as there is no doubt that, in certain areas relating to this subject, the Services are already addressing the existing shortcomings."

I feel very strongly about that matter, but I shall move on in order to address other issues.

By the end of the decade, the RAF will have closed 30 bases at home and abroad. I am concerned that there will be too few airfields in the United Kingdom and no scope for expansion in the event of a national emergency. When the defence costs study is completed, the RAF will have fewer operational airfields in the United Kingdom than at any time since 1934. In such circumstances, it would be prudent to require that airfields be retained in an operational state and not turned into housing or industrial estates.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Northavon (Sir J. Cope), who complained earlier about university air squadrons, will probably not agree with me, but I sincerely believe that we should retain those airfields. If we use university squadrons or other flying squadrons to keep them open, so much the better.

I welcome the assurances given by the Government in their commitment to the Eurofighter 2000. I believe that, when it is delivered, the programme will justify the investment in time, effort and money. I also welcome the proposals to invite bids for replacing the Nimrod maritime patrol aircraft. I am glad that the Tornado GR1 has been upgraded and that laser-guided weapons will be purchased.

I also welcome the introduction of the anti-armour stand-off missile and the fact that the conventionally armed stand-off missile programme will proceed on schedule. Those decisions are essential if we are to maintain the capability of the Royal Air Force into the future. I welcome the fact that the Harrier GR7 is in operational service and I would like my hon. Friend the Minister to confirm that all that aircraft's service requirements have been met. The GR7 is being used by the Royal Navy on its aircraft carriers and it is not the first time that the RAF have operated from Navy carriers.

Will my hon. Friend the Minister refer to the reorganisation of the Royal Air Force auxiliary units in his speech? I would like him to explain what is happening to the volunteer reserve units—particularly the public relations flight officers and the intelligence officers, who did such sterling work during the Gulf war and who currently serve in units in Iraq and the former Yugoslavia.

I believe that a small professional Royal Air Force—that is what we will have when the defence costs study is complete—should have a substantial reserve capability. I hope that the Government's thoughts are now turning to enlarging and widening the size and scope of the reserve forces, including the flying reserves. It will not surprise my colleagues to learn that I shall conclude my comments by referring to the air cadets.

Last Sunday Air Commodore Peter Stean, the commandant of air cadets, and Air Vice Marshal Peter Squire, the Assistant Chief of the Air Staff, and I attended the east midlands wing air cadets field day and review. There were 950 youngsters on parade and more than 300 adults. I wish that our media would concentrate on the good youngsters in this country; I wish that they had been there to see those youngsters and the adult uniformed staff on parade and on duty. I remind the House that those adult staff receive pay only for attending courses and camps. That means that for every day that they are paid the nation gets their services free for eight days.

As president of Volunteer Gliding Schools, I express my concern that, with fewer service airfields available, the deployment of volunteer gliding schools is an ever-increasing challenge. We are nearing the point when we may run out of airfields. That problem must be addressed if volunteer gliding schools are to be situated close to air cadet catchment areas.

Early-day motion 533, which has been signed by a substantial number of hon. Members, congratulates the Government on their support for the cadet forces, particularly the air cadets.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Northavon drew attention to concerns about the university air squadrons and their Bulldog aircraft. He probably does not know that the air cadet air experience flights and the university air squadrons have merged and that the air cadets will fly some of the Bulldogs. That will apply in Colerne as well as everywhere else and I hope that those aircraft continue to generate noise around Colerne. I believe that when people complain about the noise of light aircraft—particularly the Bulldogs or power gliders—we should deploy a squadron of Harriers for a week to show them what life on a military base is like.

I know that other hon. Members wish to speak in the debate, so I shall conclude my remarks. The Duke of Edinburgh got it right when he said:

"There are many ways of giving useful service to the nation, but none can be more valuable than helping young people to grow up into responsible citizens. Adolescence is a particularly difficult and challenging period in their lives, but it can be eased by offering them opportunities to experience adventure, discipline and responsibility."

That is what the cadet forces do and they are a national asset. The air cadets perform a particularly important function and I am delighted by the strong support that they receive from Ministers. On behalf of the air cadets, I thank the Government for their support. I know that my hon. Friend the Minister has recently visited some air cadet units. They appreciate his interest and I hope that he will make many more such visits in the future.

7.17 pm

**Mr. Peter Hardy** (Wentworth): I shall respond to some of the issues raised by the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) in a moment. The Secretary of State for Defence said earlier that he had written the Defence White Paper. We all know that the Secretary of State's signature will appear at the bottom of it, but I believe that Defence White Papers are written by accountants with a particularly creative bent—not least because of the distinct inaccuracies which have appeared in almost all of them.

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement is well aware of that and he said that there would be wider involvement in international activity. That occurs frequently and, when additional commitments are made, I am sure that the Secretary of State will offer that to the House as a further excuse for the Defence White Paper being blown off course. I shall return to that subject in a moment.

As hon. Members who have spoken in the debate have said, the Royal Air Force has contracted severely in the past few years. As many hon. Members are well aware, the contraction has gone far enough. Many of us consider that it has gone too far. We have nine operational stations in Britain, and two in Germany, for strike, offensive support, air defence, reconnaissance, and airborne warning and communication system—AWACS—aircraft.

The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell), who made a substantial speech, may be right to say that there may be a removal from Germany. That would leave us with nine operational stations in Britain and that would make the condition of the RAF far less satisfactory than it was in 1934—a point made by the hon. Member for Tayside, North. There would be only nine operational stations for the highest quality air force in western Europe.

We are concerned about not only the number of stations, but the number of personnel. The contraction continues, but the commitments may continue to expand. Perhaps the Minister will remind us of the number and names of the countries in which RAF personnel have served or are serving this year. Conservative Members may not like being reminded, but it would be useful to have that on record.

I am extremely anxious about the Government's management of the air force and their policies in respect of the involvement of the private sector. I have always believed in the mixed economy and there is certainly a place for private sector involvement in the RAF. There are benefits for the private sector and the air force, but the Government, in their slavish regard for dogma, are so eager to get rid of blue uniforms and pass business and profit to the private sector that they put the service in difficulty.

Reducing the number of blue uniforms on an RAF station weakens the service and reduces the capacity of that service to guard its own bases, or even reduces the service so that it cannot fulfil one of its obligations—to provide a full life for the people committed to that service 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Sooner or later, a Royal Air Force station will not be able to raise an unit football team so few will be the blue uniforms in it. That position is likely to arise unless the Government temper their attitude.

I was grateful for the Minister's reference to the fact that the position at St. Athan and Sealand may not be as fearful as some of us dreaded. The Government have gone too far and are reducing the capacity of the service to be the intelligent customer to whom reference was made.

May I begin the main part of my speech with another criticism that has not yet been offered? So far in the debate, there have been frequent references to the second world war. However, the Government have not yet perceived that their political role is not merely to administer the service, but to protect its image.

It is all very well for the Minister today to talk about the contribution of the Royal Air Force in the second world war, but when such comments are needed, and have been needed in the past few years, they were not made. In a debate in the House just after the row about the Harris memorial—one or two Conservative Members may recall that debate—I pointed out that no one put it on record that Bomber Command flew not simply to kill German citizens or destroy German morale. If Bomber Command had not flown in the war, the Germans, with the capacity for aircraft manufacture that has been referred to, would not have produced the fighters that were used to attack the bomber squadrons over German skies; they would have produced bomber aircraft that would have dropped bombs on Britain. One wonders what would have been said 50 years later about the destruction of British cities.

The bomber squadrons flying over German skies occupied more than 1 million German soldiers and scores of thousands of German guns. If they had not been kept back to defend German towns, cities and industries, they could have been deployed in Normandy, and we now know that the invasion was a closer run thing than the propaganda machine liked to admit.

**Mr. Bill Walker:** The hon. Gentleman might draw attention to the fact that the V2 would have been in service much earlier had it not been for the Royal Air Force knocking out that capability.

**Mr. Hardy:** I am aware of the successful raid on the Peenemunde establishment by Bomber Command. In February, after we had the failure of communication or protection in respect of the Harris memorial and we were listening to the laudable and commendable attempts to create reconciliation, on the anniversary of the dreadful raid on Dresden, there was another outburst of criticism of the Royal Air Force. The raid on Dresden was a terrible thing and a lot of people died. Nearly as many people died as a result of the RAF raid on Dresden as died in the concentration camps on the same day. The echoes of the V1 and V2 missiles, to which the hon. Gentleman referred, were still noticeable in south-east England. The battle of the bulge had only just taken place and there was vicious hand-to-hand fighting because Germany had not surrendered. If the air raid had taken place over Dresden after the Germans had offered to surrender, it would have been a heinous and terrible act, but war is war.

It is regrettable that Ministers with a political responsibility to guard the heritage and tradition of the service did not defend it in the terms that should have been offered. It is not simply a matter of protecting the economic condition of the RAF. When game is under threat, gamekeepers are required and the role of the RAF as gamekeeper in the national interest has eroded and withered away.

A few moments ago, the Minister of State intervened in regard to the house occupied by Air Chief Marshal Sir Sandy Wilson. He made a robust criticism of the role of the press in that matter. I agree that the press behaved very badly. As I said earlier, there was a great deal of attention on the Friday, when the Secretary of State appeared on television, but, a few days later, there was none when the Minister of State intervened in the speech of the hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown) on the role of senior officers.

I do not believe that Sir Sandy Wilson received a fair deal from the press or from Ministers. Ministers did not make it clear that the house had been empty for 14 months or what its value was. Indeed, the press seems to be under the impression that the house was worth less than half the

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value that the Minister might like to tell us later in the debate. I do not believe that the press was adequately informed of the principal suggestion that Air Chief Marshal Sir Sandy Wilson made. Because the house had previously been occupied by a two-star officer and he was a four-star officer who, because of reorganisation, was to occupy the house as one of the most senior officers in the RAF, it would be appropriate to have an internal wall knocked out, to make a large room. It would have been appropriate for the Minister to have said—the press has not been told—who was the budget holder for that property. Altogether, there was a nasty taste and a suggestion was made that Air Chief Marshal Sir Sandy Wilson was a scapegoat. I understand why the Government, with their propensity to appoint people who agree with them at all costs, took that course.

I am reminded of a long time ago when I was a schoolmaster. In those days it was fashionable for my education authority to appoint as headmasters people who were willing to please the director of education at all times, sometimes from a supine position. I was responsible for quite a few things, including the school timetable. I found that I was unable to give the headmaster anything other than a first-year form. The naughty children in the first-year form were sent to me. I would much rather we had had headmasters who would stand up to directors of education—someone prepared to put his feet down firmly and speak out when necessary. If it is important for a headmaster to have that sort of character, so it should be for a senior officer in Her Majesty's forces. Unfortunately, the present Administration is looking for supine senior officers. As that is the sort of officer that the Government want, they will try to ensure that that is the officer that in future they will get. There will not be room for outspoken fighter pilots who have intelligence and a certain amount of nerve. There will not be room for those who are not prepared to subscribe to every fashion that the Government wish to adopt.

Conservative Members who have criticised the Government's policy are entitled to do so. It is in the interests of our country that we maintain a high-quality RAF. I see that the hon. Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) is in his place. He has played a distinguished part in the Western European Union for a long time. He will be aware that the last sitting of the WEU in 1994 saw it considering a report that I presented on the capability of the air forces of western Europe. I began to prepare the report with some anxiety about what I should find, and what I found was somewhat surprising. When it came to all-weather strike capability, air-to-air refuelling, adequate reconnaissance, up-to-date strike capacity, adequate flying training and sufficient numbers of flying hours, most of western Europe was sadly lacking.

Last year, we had parliamentarians from eastern Europe rushing to Paris understandably to express considerable anxiety about their security. If any of us represented a constituency relatively close to the newly appointed Colonel Zhirinovsky—he has just been made an honorary colonel in the Russian army—we would understand their anxiety. He has been demanding that Russia recovers its former provinces, which are now independent and sovereign states. It is not surprising that parliamentarians from eastern and central Europe rushed to Paris to ask for security guarantees.

It is surprising, however, that most western European countries listened to their neighbours from eastern and central Europe and almost fell over themselves to promise them the security guarantees for which they asked when they had no capacity to deliver anything. Some of the countries that gave eastern and central Europe the security guarantees for which their parliamentarians pleaded have little capacity to defend themselves, let alone anyone else.

I do not like it that Britain has had to bear a much heavier burden than many of its fellow NATO members. It is about time that the Government began to tell them rather more firmly and clearly that the United Kingdom should not have to bear burdens that they themselves should bear. They have done well out of ducking responsibility over the past 30 or 40 years. We, of course, have accepted the obligation to defend ourselves.

For as long as we have a seat on the General Council of the United Nations, we must accept the bill that so ensues. If we are part of the international community—I hope that my party will remain internationalist—we must accept the obligations that that brings. The obligations that the RAF has fulfilled on behalf of Britain over the past 30 years—indeed, over the past 30 months—have been fulfilled extremely impressive and a source of pride for the nation. The obligations have been costly, but they have been carried out responsibly.

How can we expect the service to maintain such commitments and roles when we have just eight squadrons of strike Tornados, six squadrons of air-defence Tornados, two squadrons of Jaguars, three squadrons of Harriers and only two major bases, at Brize Norton and Lyneham, for major transport services? The line has become extremely thin under a Conservative Government, who for 16 years in office—the same can be said of the Conservative party for the 15 years that preceded the present Administration—prattled about the need to maintain the nation's defence.

Obviously, the ending of the cold war brought about different economic demands, but the Minister will be aware that far more people in Europe have died, been maimed, driven mad or ethnically cleansed since the cold war ended than when it prevailed. Yet there is no real prospect of absolute security in Europe. There is certainly no real prospect of absolute security in other parts of the world.

It should be understood that we need to see the development of international authority. We must recognise the absurdities in the command structures of the United Nations and ensure that they are removed. If we are to get rid of them and if there is to be a proper response to crises, it is certain that Britain will have a major role to play. If Britain is to play that role, the RAF will have much to do, but I see the RAF having little capacity to expand at any speed.

My hon. Friend the Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) my parliamentary neighbour, has already spoken about RAF Finningley. I have known Finningley since I was a boy. I was in the air training corps when I flew in an Airspeed Oxford at Finningley. I doubt whether anyone in the air force has flown one in recent years. Probably many RAF personnel would not recognise it. Finningley was an important station during the war, and remained so after the war. It was probably one of the largest aircrew training bases in NATO. It represented a substantial capital investment by the United Kingdom and it has had considerable meaning for the economy of south Yorkshire.

The Minister will be aware that I wrote to him about RAF Finningley. I think that I sent a copy of the letter to my hon. Friend the Member for Don Valley. I referred to the history of the station and to its economic importance in terms of jobs in south Yorkshire. I was told, "We cannot take those factors into account." A narrow assumption has had to be made, but if needs develop, where shall we train the loadmasters, the air engineers, the aircrew electronic operators and the navigators? Will there be privatisation and greater costs? South Yorkshire jobs will be lost, the base will go, and we might find ourselves short of runways.

It is not only those consequences that cause me to be angry. The Government have not paid proper attention to the need to maintain the image of the service. When the air day took place at Finningley—the last one was held in September 1994—more people attended it to express, directly or indirectly, their appreciation of the service as it is today and as it was, than attended the St Leger horse race a week earlier. It was an enormous attraction. It was probably the most important attraction in the social calendar of south Yorkshire. Yet it is to be taken away for the narrowest of considerations.

We know that the Government can throw enormous sums away without batting an eyelid. Against that background, one wonders about the closure of Finningley. Will the Minister therefore explain a story that I read in *The Daily Telegraph* a little while ago? It said that £5 million had been lost on a failed project to transfer married quarters to a housing trust and mentioned three-year contracts for the chairman and financial directors of that trust, who were in place for only a very short time. They received getting on for £500,000. The article said that the failure of the trust, which has virtually been wound up, meant that the Ministry of Defence was left with a budgetary shortfall of £500 million. I am not an expert in creative accountancy, but when a budgetary shortfall of £500 million can simply be ignored, I can think only that the attitude towards RAF Finningley is quite dreadful.

The Government may feel that they are well equipped to run the nation's defences, but the experience of the RAF over the past few years does not justify their claim. I hope that the Minister will pay some attention, if not to Opposition Members, to his hon. Friends, who are capable of giving advice which should be heard and to which he should attend. As I said, the line is too thin. The needs are likely to increase and the dangers are enormous. We are right to point out that present policies are not succeeding; they are creating dangers which should be acknowledged. A new approach is necessary if the Royal Air Force is to be able to guard the skies of Britain and to contribute to world stability and peace in the years ahead.

7.40 pm

**Mr. John Wilkinson** (Ruislip-Northwood): As we have this debate on the eve of our commemoration of victory in Europe, we may appropriately ask ourselves how best can we keep faith with those who died that we might be free? I suspect that those who died would say, "Do not make the same mistakes again in government which made our task so difficult. Look resolutely forward and help to build a Royal Air Force, whose structure, strategies, manpower policy and equipment will stand the test of time."

In the middle of this decade, as throughout the history of the Royal Air Force, we are experiencing dramatic change. In the air force's earliest days, in the great war, which culminated with the birth of the service on 1 April 1918, air power in four brief years moved from Army co-operation to the deployment of an independent air force; a striking force that could hit the Ruhr and the western part of Germany. Very quickly thereafter, we had the Geddes axe, the dramatic retrenchments and then, all too soon, the hasty build-up that, of course, ended, in the second world war. When that war ended so thankfully in May 50 years ago, the bombers that had dropped bombs were rapidly redeployed to drop food for starving civilians and, in some instances, to repatriate prisoners of war.

We thought then that we could enjoy a period of peace, but all too soon the cold war broke out. We should recall the deterrent role so successfully played by the Royal Air Force throughout that war. To recall such a role is fitting because, only a few days ago, Her Majesty's Government announced that about three years from now the Royal Air Force will relinquish its last nuclear weapons.

With a great sense of responsibility, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, the V bombers—my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) knows more about them than I because he served on them—were the first custodians of our independent strategic nuclear deterrent. Thereafter, the Royal Air Force maintained a tactical capability which is soon to be phased out. I ask the House to bear with me if I question the wisdom of phasing out that capability.

One of the inherent advantages of air power is its basic flexibility. I doubt whether a sub-strategic Trident system will ever deter as effectively as multi-role combat aircraft—that is to say, dual-capable strike aircraft, which can be deployed to a theatre and, by their deployment, send a signal to an adversary who would otherwise behave aggressively. I have said before that I believe that the threat of bluff being called is greater when we deploy deterrent forces which, by their submarine nature, are invisible and less apparent in the theatre of emergency tension or potential war. So I regret the decision not to press ahead with the tactical air-to-surface nuclear missile—the TASM—and I wonder too whether the studies into the proposed conversion of the strategic submarine nuclear, the Trafalgar class for Tomahawk cruise missiles, will prove costly and can be effectively done. I suspect otherwise.

I take heart, however, from the modernisation of the Royal Air Force's front line. I am delighted with the decision to buy the Hercules C130 J transport, with the new support helicopters, with the procurement of the European fighter aircraft, with the weapons systems that we are buying, such as the conventionally armed stand-off missile, the intelligent anti-armour weapon and much else besides, such as the replacement maritime patrol aeroplane. There has been, in short, an effective re-equipment programme—not yet completed—in which we can take great satisfaction.

Of course, to make that possible, there have been reductions in support, the rationalisation of the headquarters and staff structures and massive redundancies. We have seen proud stations close. How eloquently the hon. Members for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) and for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) spoke about Finningley and the loss of multi-engine and rear-crew training from that station. How sad it is as well that RAF Chivenor, where so many fast-jet pilots converted to Vampires and in later years to Hunters, and more recently did their tactical weaponry on the Hawk, is closed yet again. It is hard not to

*[Mr. John Wilkinson]*

be emotional about the closure of RAF Scampton, the war-time home of 617 Dambuster squadron. Everybody who cares for the history of the Royal Air Force will find that closure very emotional, especially as it has been in recent years the home of the central flying school and the Royal Air Force aerobatic team the Red Arrows.

With those changes have come not only improvement in equipment, but certain redeployments in which we can rejoice. I must thank my friend the late Air Chief Marshal Sir John Thomson, who was one of the Royal Air Force's outstanding senior officers in recent years. One of the last things which he did as outgoing air officer commander-in-chief of strike command was to approve the decision to incorporate the Queen's flight into the 32 Communication squadron at RAF Northolt, in my constituency, to become the Royal squadron.

We take great pride in that locally, as we do in the fact that RAF Northolt is one of the oldest flying stations in Royal Air Force service. It was opened first as a Royal Flying Corps base in 1915—80 years ago—and it played a proud and important part in the battle of Britain. As we commemorate victory in Europe, it is important to note that it was the home not just of RAF fighter squadrons, but of the gallant Poles who went into action at the height of the battle of Britain, whose memorial stands at the threshold of my constituency and whose gallantry, along with that of the Czechs and others who served alongside British service men in world war two, we must commemorate. We must also commemorate the role of the auxiliaries and volunteer reserves and I am pleased that No. 1 maritime headquarters unit of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force is at RAF Northolt.

In the changes that have occurred, there has been a risk of concentrating on managerial imperatives rather than on the prime necessity for our armed forces, which is to be ready to fight at all times. This is the cardinal criterion for the creation of effective armed forces. As we allow ourselves this historic perspective, I wonder whether, in world war two, Bomber Harris at Bomber command, Hugh Dowding at Fighter command or Jack Slessor at Coastal command, could have been effective commanders in chief had they, at the same time, had to be members of the Air Force Board wrestling with policy problems in Whitehall.

It may be all right in peace time for commanders in chief to combine, as must the board of directors of a big company, executive and policy functions. However, I do not believe that it would be possible in war.

**Mr. Soames:** My hon. Friend is a former serving officer. He knows as well as I that the two tasks must be carried out. It is not an option for management. Good management of resources, as my hon. Friend is well aware, is not an optional extra. In my judgment, the astonishing success of the three services is that they managed to combine in the same officers, the absolutely unbelievable ability to be extremely good managers and very good war fighters.

**Mr. Wilkinson:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister, but that was not really the point I was making. I was trying to suggest that it might be all right in peace time in a period when there is no serious risk of an emergency or war for commanders in chief to have a role on the Air Force Board as well. However, in war, when they have operations to conduct, I do not see how it could be possible for them to combine their operational responsibilities at headquarters with policy direction in Whitehall alongside Her Majesty's Government. That was my point and I think that it is valid.

At the beginning of my speech, I said that we should look resolutely forward. I hope that the RAF is paying sufficient attention to the crucial necessity for ballistic missile defence. We are conscious from our television screens of the horrendous sight of Zagreb being attacked with ordinary Katousha-type rockets. However, in the Yemen civil war only a few moths ago, Scud ballistic missiles were launched from North Yemen to South Yemen and vice versa. We must address the problem and set up an effective theatre ballistic missile defence architecture.

I recognise that the Government have initiated studies on a bilateral basis with our French friends and the Americans. I am aware of the NATO studies and of the time scale within which analyses are being carried out by British Aerospace and others. All that is welcome. However, with Islamic fundamentalism on the march, with great uncertainty in the Balkans, the Maghreb countries and in nations which are within ballistic missile reach of these islands, we must address the problem.

As a further lesson from the Gulf war, we should address more seriously the benefits to our defences of a military space programme, particularly with regard to reconnaissance, confidence-building measures, surveillance, early warning and signals intelligence. I hope to hear that we are co-ordinating our efforts with our European and American friends in those areas.

With regard to co-operation with our allies, I must state that I do not believe that it is politically necessary for us to retain two RAF bases in Germany. I would withdraw the Harrier wing and support helicopters from Laarbruch and the Tornado wing from RAF Bruggen. After all, the problems with low flying in Germany have been mentioned. There are no longer any Russian armed forces—thank God—anywhere in central Europe. We should redeploy the RAF units to which I have referred back to the United Kingdom, and thereby keep vital bases in this country open and improve employment prospects here.

The key to the future of the service lies, as ever, with its personnel. At a time when numbers of armed forces personnel and uniformed men and women are decreasing, we must compensate by improving training rather than cutting training. It is a very false economy to cut training, particularly at a time of numerical retrenchment and reduction.

I urge that we create a tri-service cadet college at Greenwich where young men and women can spend a year together in prestigious surroundings, in the public eye, learning the discipline necessary for a service career, the history of the services and military science. That would be a better induction to service life than the 24 weeks of initial officer training at Cranwell. When they have completed cadet training and have proved that they have the necessary qualities, we could then send them to Cranwell for proper professional training, both elementary flying training and basic, because they could both be carried out at Cranwell.

I query the service plans with regard to multi-engine training because they do not appear to be defined. There will be a study in Canada into training by civilian contractors. The experience of the service has always been that it is better to do it in a uniformed and disciplined environment.

Finally, if we are going to have a Royal Air Force which is capable of expansion, there must be effective reserves. I am glad about the progress that has been made in the Royal Auxiliary Air Force. Combining it with the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve was wise. The regiment squadrons have done well. The aero-medical section at Brize Norton is a success as is the movements auxiliary unit at Brize Norton. I am glad that reserve air crew have an opportunity to fly the Wessex and the C130. I hope that in 1996 Royal Air Force reservists may have an opportunity to fly fast jets.

Let me remind the House, however, how inadequate our response is in this area as compared with that of the Israelis and the Americans. *Jane's Defence Weekly* on 11 March 1995 states:

"US Air Force Reserve F16s on 'Deny Flight'"—

that is, over the Balkans—

"Deployment of two US Air Force Reserve squadrons to Aviano Air Base, Italy, to enforce the no-fly zone over Bosnia has enabled"—

regular F16s to return to the United States for advanced training. That is the kind of measure we need to reduce some of the overstretch and strain in our regular units and to enable better use to be made of trained manpower when they leave the service.

All in all, the Government have done well with regard to the RAF. I am hopeful for the future and we would keep faith with those who died in the service of our country in the RAF, and to whom we pay tribute, if we continued the modernisation of the service which is, broadly, on the right lines.

7.59 pm

**Mr. Harry Cohen** (Leyton): I am surprised that no one has quoted Sir Winston Churchill's famous phrase about the Royal Air Force at the time of the Battle of Britain. I suspect that that is because the phrase is copyright, and any money derived from quoting it would go to the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) or his trustees, in addition to his lottery windfall. In the circumstances, a more appropriate quote may be, "Never has so much been paid by so many for so little." However, that is more relevant to the lottery than it is to the RAF.

I pay genuine tribute to the RAF. I have said in previous RAF debates that its professionalism and standards are of the highest quality, and I reiterate that.

I wish to make two brief points. First, there is the question of the use of information obtained by the RAF Turkey in the invasion of Iraq. I am concerned at reports that Turkish forces invading the safe areas for Kurds in northern Iraq were able to use images obtained by RAF aircraft to help plan their operations.

I have a report dated 30 March this year, which states:

"Royal Air Force officials admitted yesterday that high-quality security photographs of the Kurdish safe areas in northern Iraq, taken by RAF and French warplanes, have been shared with Turkish military officers."

"The officials said only that they will continue to monitor the situation and that Ankara has been told to respect the principle of territorial integrity."

Turkey did not respect the principle of territorial integrity because 35,000 Turkish troops, backed by warplanes and tanks, attacked those safe areas. They have left that area only in the past day.

That was a gross abuse of the images obtained by the RAF. If the use of those images by Turkey is proven beyond doubt—as I said, RAF officials have admitted it—I call for Turkey to be prevented from having any further access to such images. The Minister should say what the Government's response has been, and whether they have made or will make representations to Turkey on the issue.

**Mr. Hardy:** The Royal Air Force is based in Turkey. Turkey is its host and also a part of NATO. Does my hon. Friend agree that the Royal Air Force cannot refuse to co-operate with a partner, and that if there is to be criticism and blame, it should be directed at the Administration in Turkey, and perhaps to our Foreign Office?

**Mr. Cohen:** I half agree with my hon. Friend. I am not blaming the RAF in this matter. There must have been a political decision to hand the images over to the Turkish authorities. I blame the Turkish authorities for invading the safe areas in Iraq. My criticism is of the Government. Somebody at a high level acceded to a request, if one was made, for the images.

The upshot is that the images were used for an operation for which they should not have been used—a national military operation by Turkey against safe areas. The Government should rebuke the Turkish Government on the matter. Will that be done?

**Lady Olga Maitland:** Is the hon. Gentleman aware that, while Turkey did go over the border, it was attacking PKK terrorist camps? Perhaps the hon. Gentleman is not aware that the PKK has killed thousands of innocent men, women and children in Turkey. The invasion was an attempt to combat international terrorism.

**Mr. Cohen:** There is a lot of argument about Turkey and its war against the Kurds and the PKK and the slaughter of the Alavi people. However, what has happened is that Turkey has used RAF images to help invade another country, northern Iraq, and the safe havens that were guaranteed by the United Nations. Indeed, the Prime Minister took credit for setting up those safe areas. RAF images and information should not have been used, in those circumstances, to help bomb and attack those areas. We need a ministerial response.

Secondly, I wish to discuss cluster bombs, and particularly the definition of cluster bombs. I want to query the compatibility of the BL755 cluster bomb with our obligations under international law, and with what could become our obligations under international law after the United Nations weaponry convention review in September.

About a month ago, I asked the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, the hon. Member for Boothferry (Mr. Davis), about land mines. He enunciated a new Government policy to the House of the responsible use of mines, by which he meant that they should be mapped and later removed.

In a letter to me of 21 April, the Minister claimed:

"the BL755 is not a land mine and does not include an anti-personnel land mine as a component."

That raises the issue of what the definition of a mine is.

I like simple, clear definitions, because they are the easiest to keep to. I suggest that anything that is on the ground and is triggered by a person coming into contact with it to cause that person death or injury is an

*[Mr. Cohen]*

anti-personnel land mine. That is precisely what the anti-personnel element of the BL755 does, and that is contrary to what the Minister stated in his letter to me. The bomblets, to use the military's term, in the BL755 are scattered when the cluster bomb is deployed, ready to kill and maim people who enter the affected area.

The Government are playing around with meanings and definitions. Most people recognise a distinction between a bomb and a mine. The former explodes on impact with the ground, while the latter waits—this is the key point—on the ground for the victim to come into contact with it. That is why the BL755 produces a minefield by any other name. The weapons within it are clearly mines under the definition that I have used.

If the weapon were to be used, would the RAF go along and drop a team of sappers to mark the resulting minefield behind enemy lines? Of course not. How can the weapon be used responsibly and in compliance with protocol 2 of the inhumane weapons convention as the Government claim?

There is a further important question. We exported such weapons to the former Yugoslavia, and they are now in Serbian hands. In the past couple of days, Zagreb has been attacked with cluster bombs—perhaps the bombs that we sold. Can the Minister confidently tell the House that he expects the Serbs not to use those weapons indiscriminately if the no-fly zone is ever rescinded? Will they use them "responsibly", in the Government's parlance?

The BL755 blows up—or, if hon. Members can excuse the pun, undermines—the responsible use of mines policy that the Government enunciated only a few weeks ago. Ministers can get around the problem only by pretending that the BL755 does not have a mine element at all, but it does. It waits on the ground for somebody to come into contact with it.

The Government's approach will fool no one, but many tyrants around the world will do likewise, and say that they do not have any mines when they do. It could put the protocol, the effort to ban or reduce the number of land mines, and even the Government's desired "responsible" use of mines, in jeopardy. I therefore urge the Government to think again about the BL755 cluster bomb, especially in relation to our international obligations.

8.9 pm

**Mr. David Atkinson** (Bournemouth, East): The lesson of the events that we commemorate this weekend is that the price of peace is eternal vigilance. Had that lesson been learned following the first world war, the second could have been avoided.

I shall use this debate on air defence to enlarge on the call made by my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) and the warning that I gave in a previous defence debate, which is that this country and Europe are not prepared for ballistic missile attack. In support of that warning, I paint what I readily accept is a worst case scenario but which I believe to be wholly plausible.

No one doubts that the future of Algeria lies on a knife edge, and that today's civil war could lead to an Islamic fundamentalist Government. Within weeks, perhaps days, that revolution could be exported to neighbouring Tunisia, where the Ben Ali Government could be replaced by the banned Islamic Renaissance party. Before Europe and the United States of America had time to respond, Muslim radicals in Egypt could have incited the mob to overthrow the Mubarak Government. Immediately, the border between Egypt and Gaza would be pulled down. As Islamic brothers embraced, Israel would mobilise, and the peace process would be dead.

In response, President Clinton and NATO would order ships to the eastern Mediterranean and send troops to support King Hassan in Morocco, which is fast becoming destabilised by the flood of refugees from Algeria, and is itself threatened by revolution.

Unable to believe their luck, President Gaddafi and the ayatollahs in Iran would promise to reinforce the new regimes, which would request the immediate supply of missiles of all kinds. Of course, Iran and Libya have more than enough to go around, having recently taken delivery of large quantities of RoDong ballistic missiles from North Korea. In addition, they have long held hundreds of Scuds B and C, Al Fatah and Tondar medium-range missiles.

They would no doubt press North Korea to speed up the development and supply of its larger longer-range NoDong missiles, which Libya is co-financing and which would put this country within range. Apart from Israel, there is only one direction in which these missiles located along the entire southern shore of the Mediterranean would face, and that is Europe.

The question to which I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister of State will respond is, are we prepared for such a threat today and in the immediate future? Also, are we prepared for accidental, unauthorised or even deliberate launches from the growing number of countries that possess or that are developing and acquiring ballistic missiles?

I have no doubt that my hon. Friend the Minister will refer to the initiatives for the future missile defence of Europe which are now under way, such as our two-year programme of pre-feasibility studies, parallel studies in NATO, informal discussions with allies and close links between the Ministry and the United States Ballistic Missile Defence Organisation.

None of that suggests that we are prepared now. It does suggest, however, that there is some overlap, and that this country is hardly at the centre of co-operation between the United States of America and our allies in preparing for the future missile defence of Europe—quite the reverse.

Why is the United Kingdom not part of the agreement made three months ago by the United States of America, Germany, France and Italy to co-operate in developing an extended air defence capability against ballistic missiles, which is known as MEADS, or the medium extended air defence system? Why are we not considering the development of a European space-based observation system and an early warning system, which are essential for effective anti-missile defence and which should surely be on the agenda of the forthcoming intergovernmental conference of the European Union in relation to the future European defence community?

As ballistic missiles are at their most vulnerable before their descent, which was the central argument in support of President Reagan's strategic defence initiative, should we not be pursuing and sharing with our allies the research into an interception system that is space-based, as well as a ground-based theatre missile defence system, which has effectively replaced star wars?

On a parallel tack, what plans do we have to strengthen the missile technology control regime, which is what President Clinton prefers to star wars? It needs a formal, well-researched secretariat, and its guidelines need to take account of payload as well as range. Many of its members need to strengthen in their national laws the principles of the regime.

New attempts must be made to bring in the major suppliers of ballistic missile technology, such as Russia and China, that remain outside the regime. Certainly, future membership of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development should require it. Potential suppliers from the former Soviet Union, such as Belarus, Ukraine and Kazakhstan, should be encouraged to join, while second-tier suppliers such as India and North Korea should continue to be pressed to adhere to it.

As the war was coming to an end 50 years ago, London and the south-east were still living in fear of the first ever ballistic missile to be used in war against which we had no defence—the V2. Today, some 38 countries already have or are developing increasingly reliable and longer-range successors to the V2. That fact, combined with the spread of weapons of mass destruction to be used with those missiles, is giving our regional adversaries a political and military leverage that was inconceivable at the beginning of the decade.

If we do not have the capability to respond effectively to these threats, we will be deterred from taking action against Saddam Hussein and his kind in the future, and our enemies will know that they can have their way without a shot being fired. This represents the greatest challenge to the defence of Europe today, as well as to our ability to defend Europe's interests anywhere in the world, most notably in the middle east.

**Mr. Freeman:** As we are not as pressed for time as we are in some other debates, it might be convenient for the House if I comment briefly on the matters that my hon. Friend aimed directly at me.

The Government take ballistic missile defence extremely seriously. Nothing should be read into the fact that we are not participating in the United States MEADS programme. We are pursuing parallel initiatives, and I maintain a very close connection with my opposite numbers in the Pentagon on this matter.

When we have the conference in London in June to discuss ballistic missile defence, I shall be announcing on behalf of the Government not only the progress being made on the feasibility study led by British Aerospace but, more important, the fact that we have recently authorised the investment of some £8 million in technology demonstrators, especially in the sphere of radar defence against ballistic missiles.

I hope that that satisfies my hon. Friend. I shall be sure to tell my hon. Friend the Minister of State who is winding up the debate, and who might not be able to respond to the points that my hon. Friend has made and has yet to make, that I have taken the liberty of dealing with some of them.

**Mr. Atkinson:** I am delighted that my right hon. Friend has responded to some of my concerns. I am grateful to him, and I look forward to any further responses from my hon. Friend the Minister of State. I am also pleased to hear about the announcement to be made at the eighth multinational conference on theatre missile defence, which is to take place at the Queen Elizabeth II conference centre next month.

I take this opportunity to pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces for the considerable role that he is playing in the organisation of the Government's programme of official VE day and VJ day events that are forthcoming this weekend and in August. That they are appropriate to the historic occasions they commemorate, and that they will be a considerable success, there is no doubt, and I believe that the whole House should acknowledge that today. Of course, we expect nothing less from the grandson of Sir Winston Churchill.

8.19 pm

**Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones** (Ynys Môn): I hope that hon. Members will forgive me if I do not follow the lines of their contributions, as I wish to concentrate on RAF Valley, which is in my constituency.

The Minister of State will know that I corresponded with him in September last year about the Government's proposal for market testing certain services at Valley. I asked him whether it would be possible for an in-house bid to be made for those services. He wrote to me in September last year and said that there was an opportunity for a bid to be considered, although there were certain constraints about that bid. That was a less-than-fulsome assurance, but at least it confirmed that the in-house bid team at RAF Valley was to be given some assistance in preparing that bid.

On 20 April, the Ministry of Defence announced that it proposed not to allow an in-house bid to proceed, and that decision was greeted with anger and frustration by not only RAF personnel at the station and the civilian work force but the local community. I shall address some of our concerns about the proposal and, I hope, persuade the Ministry to think again during the consultation period.

RAF Valley was established in 1941 as a fighter base. It is now the only fully operational RAF airfield in Wales. The Ministry of Defence concluded that its future as a flying base should continue, at the expense of other locations, in 1993. Currently, 1,100 service personnel and 200 civilians are employed at Valley. They contribute about £20 million annually to the local economy. Many of the service personnel live in the camp village of Llanfihangel, but a significant number live in the adjoining villages of Caergeiliog, Rhosneigr, Llanfaelog, Trearddur bay and Holyhead. When I became aware that Valley was to be subjected to the market-testing exercise, I felt that it was incumbent on me to take up the matter with the Minister.

The market-testing exercise involves a total of 771 posts—573 are service personnel and 198 are civilians. The in-house bid team commenced work on the premise that the 771 posts would be reduced to 580, with 300 service personnel, the current 198 civilians, and the balance recruited as civilian staff. The fact that 300 service personnel needed to be included in the in-house bid at the outset was a clear demonstration of the need to retain sufficient staff with the appropriate skills in aircraft-related tasks.

Alongside the market-testing proposal, as the Minister of State has explained, we had the publication of the White Paper, "Front Line First", with its requirement to

*[Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones]*

reduce RAF manpower from 73,000 at present to 52,200 by March 1999. Given the time scale for the market-testing proposal and the manpower service reduction requirements, the in-house bid was clearly damned from the outset. Set against that background and that time scale, it could not possibly succeed.

The Ministry made it clear that a total of 300 service personnel, although it would mean a reduction of 273 on the current levels, was unacceptable because it could not otherwise meet the manpower reduction requirements. Therefore, for all those months—from September last year until January this year—the in-house bid team worked with one hand tied behind its back, and a trawl of the whole of north Wales for people with the appropriate skills in aircraft-related tasks and in specialist aircraft-related tasks produced the inevitable results: there were simply not enough people with those skills available so that they could be included in the bid.

The next step, of course, was to see whether sufficient people could be trained in time to be included in the bid. That, of course, is where we came up against the time scale constraints. The time scale for the implementation of the contractorisation programme meant that it could not be achieved. The original timetable was: May 1995, the invitation to tender—I understand that there might be some slippage—then November 1995, the choice of contractor; January 1996, a six-month handover period to commence; and July 1996, total handover to the contractor. Even the most optimistic person would have to agree that, if 300 service personnel with specialist skills had to be taken out of the bid, it would be impossible to train 300 people from the local community within 14 months in time for the handover.

Because there are no aircraft-related industries within the local community, there is no pool of ready, available labour to take the place of the service personnel. If the work were handed over to an outside contractor, the loss of jobs in Anglesey would be catastrophic, and the impact on the local community enormous. Contractors will say that they will do their best to employ local people, but the reality is that, because some of the jobs require specialist skills, many people from outside the area will have to be brought in.

The RAF station is located in the north-west quadrant of the island, which is part of the Holyhead travel-to-work area. The population of that part of the island is 53,000, with unemployment at 15.4 per cent.—the second highest in Wales; nearly 60 per cent. have been unemployed for more than six months. In March this year, there were 269 unfilled vacancies, which would meet 10 per cent. of the current demand. Average incomes in the area are substantially below the United Kingdom average.

The tremendous problems that the community faces—structural, economic and social problems, low incomes, and so on—will be significantly compounded if an in-house bid is not allowed. We will see not only the loss of 573 service personnel and their purchasing power in the community but 198 civilian jobs in jeopardy. That will have a significant impact, as I have said, on shops, schools and the housing market. I have already said that a significant number of service personnel live in several villages surrounding the base at Valley. If all those service personnel were transferred to other locations, the impact on the housing market in those areas would be unbelievable. When, on 20 April, the Ministry of Defence announced the decision not to allow the in-house bid, the condemnation in my constituency was universal. Morale at the station hit a new low, and people were angry at the way in which they had been treated.

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces, who I believe is to wind up the debate, sent me a reply saying that, apart from the global in-house bid covering both civilian and service personnel, the Ministry had also considered the idea of a separate in-house bid for the civilian staff alone, but it had rejected that as well. Unfortunately, the Ministry had not discussed that option with the trade unions representing the civilian staff, and the first they knew about such a bid having been considered and rejected was when they received the letter from the MOD.

I do not believe that the civilian staff should have been treated like that. They should at least have been given the opportunity to mount an in-house bid on their own, if that was what the Ministry was considering. Will the Minister ensure that during the consultation period the civilian staff and their representatives are fully consulted at each stage, so that they know what is planned for themselves, their jobs and their families? I should welcome that assurance.

What is the way forward from here? I realise that the Ministry applied certain criteria that made it impossible for the in-house bid to succeed, but I want the Minister to give us an assurance that, because of the impact on the local economy and community of a decision not to allow the bid, the Government will think again. I want the Minister to reconsider the criteria that meant that the bid could not have succeeded.

In my constituency there is not only universal condemnation of the way in which the original bid was treated but universal acceptance of the need to do everything that we can to retain those jobs in the area. In my eight years as a Member of Parliament this is the most serious problem that has faced one workplace.

The consultation period was originally set to finish on 5 June, but it has been extended until the end of that month. I understand that the Welsh Office has intervened and tried to ensure that we now bring people together, such as the Ministry, Targed—the training and enterprise council—the Welsh Development Agency, other agencies and the local authority. We are conducting an urgent skills review to find out what is possible in the area, because we want the Ministry to accept that some service personnel who accept redundancy might want to return as civilians later, although not within the current time scale.

Clearly we shall have the opportunity to discuss matters in detail at the meetings, but I ask the Minister now whether he will consider our case according to the following principles. First, the market-testing programme within the current time scale should be withdrawn. Secondly, the target date for achieving the manpower service requirements should be relaxed in the interim. Thirdly, we should assess the number of skilled service personnel in RAF Valley who may wish to convert to civilian service in the area. Next, we should allow the technical college, Coleg Menai, and other training agencies to set up courses in engineering and other disciplines to train enough people within the local labour pool to take on the jobs at Valley. Finally, the Ministry should be sensitive to the impact of any decision on the area.

If, without giving a commitment on the detail tonight, the Minister will assure us that we can agree on those principles, I shall ensure that the local committee puts up a strong case to persuade him and his Department to think again, so that the impact on the local community can be minimised.

8.34 pm

**Mr. Keith Mans** (Wyre): I am grateful for the opportunity to say a few words—but I hope that the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) will forgive me if I do not follow his speech. Although I am familiar with the airfield at Valley, on Anglesey, I am not familiar with the matters that he was discussing. I also apologise to my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement for not having been here for his opening speech. I warned him beforehand that I could not attend then, and I have managed to be here for most of the debate.

I very much welcome the White Paper this year—more so than many previous White Papers—and I am especially delighted by the section on air cadets. Perhaps at this stage it is appropriate for me to declare an interest as a pilot in the Royal Air Force Reserve. The cadet movement is most important. It is not only a recruiting ground for RAF airmen, but a link between the services and the civilian community—that applies to the other two cadet movements too. As is dwelt on in the White Paper for the first time, there is also the importance from a social point of view of encouraging worthwhile pursuits for youngsters, who learn initiative and self-reliance, and do all sorts of things that we should encourage tomorrow's citizens to do.

My right hon. Friend the Minister will know that there is something else in the White Paper that I welcome—the firm commitment to no more defence cuts. I should probably have preferred us not to have gone quite so far as we have; none the less, I am delighted that we seem finally to have come to the end of the session of defence cuts that has taken place over the past five years.

It is worth while to reflect on what has happened so far. A few years ago, the Royal Air Force was just under 90,000 personnel strong. This year, the number will be down to 66,500, and, as has already been said, by 1999 it will be only 52,200. That is a dramatic change, a 40 per cent. reduction over about seven years.

Alongside that reduction in numbers, there has been a large reduction in the amount of equipment. Across the range of aircraft in RAF service, there has been a reduction of between 30 and 40 per cent. in the front line. We now have a total of 72 strike attack aircraft, 65 offensive air support aircraft and 80 air defence aircraft. Those are the teeth of the Royal Air Force.

We should take into account all the things that those aircraft, their air crews and the supporting ground staff are doing now. They do not operate simply from one or two bases; they are deployed all over Europe and further afield. There is no doubt that, just as the British Army has suffered from overstretch in the past, the air force, as other hon. Members have said, is on the point of suffering the same fate.

Many hon. Members have also mentioned the shutting of RAF stations. I support those who have suggested that we question the retention of our two stations in Germany. We should retain some presence in Germany, but I favour withdrawing most of the front-line units to the United Kingdom. I am thinking especially of the Tornado squadrons.

Now that the cold war is over, the RAF can no longer operate down to 250 ft or even 500 ft over Germany. Therefore, most of the training of the Tornado air crews has to be done elsewhere. They have to move away from their base in Germany to train. We must therefore question whether there is any point in keeping them there. Moreover, if they returned to this country, there would at least be the possibility that we should not have to shut quite so many RAF stations in Britain.

Although we have stopped the cuts, it must be recognised that the effects of previous defence reviews will remain with us for some time. I very much welcomed the comments by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement on the Bett report. I would have liked to have seen Mr. Bett as a member of a team led by a service man, rather than the other way round. I know that the way in which the report has been produced has caused a certain amount of concern in some quarters of the three services.

Having said that, there is much good in the report. It has made people look afresh at a number of matters. My right hon. Friend will know that, during an earlier RAF debate, I questioned the need for so many ranks in the RAF, and I was interested to see that Mr. Bett himself asked the Ministry of Defence to look at that matter. I hope that that will be done.

I welcome my right hon. Friend's comments that there was a need for considerable reassurance and consultation following the Bett report, and that must happen. We must use the opportunity given by that report to allow people within the armed services to give their views freely and fully. That is the best way to reassure people that the report is not just another review or another part of the series of cuts which have had a dramatic effect on the RAF in the past seven or eight years. The Bett report has provided us with the opportunity to do precisely what I said.

**Mr. Martlew:** Does the hon. Gentleman support performance-related pay?

**Mr. Mans:** It would be perfectly acceptable to consider performance-related pay in some parts of the RAF, but I would not support it if it were applied universally throughout the RAF. There are areas where the use of performance-related pay could be of benefit, and that is what I meant about considerable consultation. It is totally wrong to rule out something which may create greater efficiency and better operational effectiveness simply because it happens to be performance-related pay. It should not be discarded without being considered.

Bearing in mind the size of the RAF now, it is vital that it has the right equipment. In this context, I would like to say a word about my right hon. Friend's job as the procurement Minister. We have seen some considerable changes in the past year in the way in which we look at those matters. Decisions have been taken which may not have been to my liking, but they have been taken in a much more practical, clear-sighted and understandable way. I am thinking in particular about the decisions on the future large aircraft, the C130J and the EH101.

I have been particularly encouraged by what my right hon. Friend has done in terms of looking at procurement in partnership with other countries, which must be the

*[Mr. Mans]*

right way forward. Weapons systems are hugely expensive, and when other nations want similar weapons themselves, it is pointless for us to try to produce something on our own. I have been encouraged by what has happened—particularly in Europe—and by the merging of companies on an international basis, which avoids the awful choice that has to be made between a national project and one brought from overseas.

**Mr. Michael Colvin** (Romsey and Waterside): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way, particularly as I have only just walked into the Chamber. The Select Committee on Defence has just been in Italy looking at the southern flank of NATO, and I am glad to see so many members of the Committee in the Chamber.

My hon. Friend has just referred to the EH101 and the importance of co-operation. We gave the Italians 50 per cent. of the manufacturing of the EH101 helicopter, which was a very good arrangement. Notwithstanding Italy's severe financial difficulties—it is trying to cut its defence budget even further than we are—would it not be nice if the Italians were to place some orders for the EH101? They have not yet done so.

**Mr. Mans:** I can answer that with one word—yes. It would be a very good idea indeed.

I have been encouraged also by the moves taken towards the future offensive aircraft, or FOA. We are always dealing in these three-letter abbreviations, and a number of similar abbreviations are associated with the studies on the successor to the Harrier aircraft. I ask my right hon. Friend the Minister to look not just to the United States in that context, but at what collaborations we can have with Europe. I do not think that we should go for one or the other, but we should look at both at the same time if possible.

There is one decision, however, with which I and a number of earlier speakers have decidedly disagreed—although it was taken before my right hon. Friend filled his present post. I refer to the decision to cancel the tactical air-to-surface missile. The RAF may have been partly responsible for that decision, as it wanted a weapon that was probably too grand and too expensive.

I am convinced that we shall be in considerable difficulty in the future if we cannot provide the RAF with some sort of stand-off nuclear capability after the WE177 is withdrawn from service in the next two or three years. My reasons for that view follow on from the excellent speech made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) a few minutes ago. If one looks at the threats that may be posed to this country in the coming decade or two, one must take account of something possibly going wrong in Russia and the appearance of a regime there that is much more militaristic and belligerent. It is right that, through NATO, we should have a deterrent that is capable of meeting that threat.

I would submit that a more likely risk to this country comes from precisely the nations which my hon. Friend mentioned in his speech. We must not just think about the conventional threat, as there is the potential for a nuclear threat as well. Until we have a system that is capable of defending us against such a threat, the only mechanism for defence is deterrence.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) rightly pointed out, it is much easier to deter effectively if one can deploy an air-launched nuclear capability which can be seen by the whole world for what it is. The potential aggressor can then see for himself that this country is serious about being prepared to go to the brink to avoid being attacked. I feel that giving Trident a sub-strategic role to meet that threat is less credible than providing the Tornados or the Eurofighter with dual capability into the next century.

I shall say a few words about air power in general. It is always said that it is very expensive to have air power, but it is even more expensive not to have it. We have seen in the past few days and weeks on our television screens air power in action during the second world war. A clear message has come out of that footage. From 1942 onwards, our troops operated on the ground with air superiority, while the German troops did not. If one speaks to German and British soldiers, one can see that that fact made a big difference.

In virtually every conflict since the second world war, with the possible exception of the Falklands—although I would argue that we at least had local air superiority there—the NATO armies, and the British Army in particular, have been able to operate in the knowledge that they had air superiority. I do not want to make a point in favour of the Royal Air Force versus the Army, but as a result the Army has become a tiny bit complacent about keeping an extra battalion of troops rather than procuring an extra squadron of aircraft. There is no point in having an extra battalion of troops if we do not have the air cover, because that will result only in considerable extra casualties.

Media coverage today is so pervasive that the results of a battle, for example in Iraq, are often on our television screens before the military commanders know what has happened. As a result, we constantly have to reduce the number of casualties, because otherwise what we are doing becomes politically unacceptable. It is vital to ensure that we incur the minimum number of casualties when we carry out military operations. In the Gulf war, we saw a graphic illustration of the effectiveness of air power in the slaughter on the roads out of Kuwait as the Iraqis streamed out. The war was probably stopped at that time as a result of the pictures of that slaughter on our television screens. That was a clear demonstration of the effectiveness of air power and of the way in which it can prevent casualties on one's own side.

I have pointed that out because I strongly believe that, if we are to prevent such conflicts, we must ensure that we have adequate air forces to secure air superiority, so that we can do what we want. Without adequate air forces, we would just have to accept much larger numbers of ground casualties.

We have also to accept that modern weapon systems and air platforms need a fair amount of support. One of the unfairest manifestations of the defence debate in the national media was the implication that the air force had a larger tail to cut. Keeping a Tornado aircraft airborne for three or four sorties a day requires a huge amount of back-up. If one does not keep the aircraft airborne for those sorties, one has wasted the investment. The only way round the problem is to increase the number of aircraft and reduce the sortie rate—one can balance one against the other.

I am pleased that we are not making any more defence cuts. As hon. Members have said, we have to look very closely indeed at the amount of support that we give the front line, especially in terms of spares and training. I get the impression that we are operating at very close to 100 per cent. and that there is not a great deal of flexibility if, for instance, we need to expand our air effort for any reason.

We have to be careful about using commercial systems of spares provision. If something goes wrong and we do not have what is needed close by, £20 million worth of aircraft could be sitting on the ground unnecessarily. The 48 aircraft that make up the four squadrons at Bruggen are our strike attack wing. My hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces might like to write to me to let me know what the serviceability of those aircraft is and how many can be expected, on average, on the front line every morning for people to fly. I suspect that it will be less than 50 per cent. of the 48.

**Mr. Menzies Campbell:** The hon. Gentleman must have inside information.

**Mr. Mans:** I do not. I am basing the assumption on my own experience. If there are 12 aircraft in a squadron, six are likely to be available to fly on any one day. I am merely saying that we are down to such small figures that we need to up that rate so that a greater percentage of the aircraft available are able to fly at any one time, to give people the training that they need.

I must say a few words on Opposition defence policy. For the past 30 years, I have been a member of the Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies. Indeed, I think that I have every quarterly magazine that it has produced. Every so often, an Opposition spokesman—normally the shadow Defence Secretary—speaks to the institute about Opposition defence policy.

I am pleased to see the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) on the Opposition Front Bench today because he spoke to the institute not too long ago. I read his speech and there was very little in it. I also looked at what all the predecessors who had filled his role since 1962 had said when they spoke to that illustrious institute. Without exception, by this stage in a Parliament, they had a defence policy that they were prepared to put before the nation. The hon. Gentleman clearly did not have such a policy. I strongly believe—I am not speaking on a party political basis—that it is important for the nation to know what the Labour party feels that we ought to be doing.

The only thing that came over in the speech of the hon. Member for South Shields was the need for another defence review, which is the one thing that the armed services do not need. There is little point in Opposition Members suggesting that they must wait and look at the books when they supposedly get into office. There is no need for them to do that.

The available options are very clear. Do the Opposition want this country to continue to have a worldwide capability—perhaps to deploy troops to support peacekeeping operations anywhere in the world? Do they still want our armed forces to be able to take part in high-intensity operations, or would they consign them purely to peacekeeping? Do they want a comprehensive capability, or are they prepared to allow someone else to provide a particular element of that capability abroad? Those questions can easily be answered now and I strongly believe that they should be.

I shall end my speech with a comment made by Air Chief Marshal Slessor many years ago. He said that the first social service that any Government should provide for its people is to make certain that they remain alive and free. I strongly believe that the Government's defence policy will guarantee precisely that, but I doubt whether the defence policies of the Opposition parties could do so.

8.58 pm

**Mr. Frank Cook** (Stockton, North): I apologise to the House for being absent for the best part of the debate. As our acting Chairman already explained, the Defence Select Committee was on duty this week in Italy and has only just returned this evening. I repeat the complaint that I made in the Chamber some time ago: all defence debates seem to be timed for periods when it is known that the Defence Select Committee will be elsewhere doing its job. When I registered that complaint in the Chamber, I was subjected to ridicule, not least from my hon. Friends, who seem to think that we toddle about on freebies enjoying ourselves. I freely admit that my job is one long holiday. I enjoy doing it, it is a great privilege and I shall continue to enjoy it and work hard at enjoying it. However, it is a bit much when every single defence debate is timed for a period when the Defence Select Committee is abroad.

I wish that I could leave the topic there, but next Tuesday when the House is to debate Bosnia, the Defence Select Committee has a long-standing engagement to attend Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker** (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. That may be so, but the hon. Gentleman must make his complaints elsewhere, not in this debate. We are supposed to be debating the Royal Air Force.

**Mr. Cook:** I am deeply grateful for your admonishment and advice, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I accept it. I thank you for giving me the chance to complain anyway.

The hon. Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) provided me with some material that will help to substantiate my arguments about defence policy, but, first, I must pick him up on two points. The first is his remarks on the desirability of performance-related pay. Some grades may be entitled to performance-related pay and I simply ask that we start with war widows. Perhaps they could be given adequate pay as a reward for the contribution of their kin folk in times past.

**Mr. Mans:** The hon. Gentleman may have misheard me. I said that we should not simply discard the idea of performance-related pay without examining it. I did not suggest that we should definitely introduce it.

**Mr. Cook:** Then perhaps we might start examining it in respect of war widows.

The hon. Member for Wyre made an effective argument based on our memories of the scale of slaughter on the road to Baghdad. I agree that the scale of that slaughter was shocking. Indeed, it resulted in some American and British air crews refusing to go out on further missions because they were simply murdering people who were not even taking the trouble to fire back. As that was done with conventional weapons, which can deliver an impact with exceedingly precise accuracy, why does the hon. Gentleman want to put on the end of some of those vehicles a weapon of mass destruction in the form of a nuclear warhead? How many people do we want to kill?

*[Mr. Cook]*

I therefore ask the hon. Member for Wyre to reconsider not only the result of performance-related pay but the scale of slaughter that one needs to vent on a potential enemy.

**Mr. Gallie:** Having followed closely the words of my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans), I remember that he said that he saw their value as weapons of deterrence, not of mass destruction.

**Mr. Cook:** I understand that and I repeat the point that I am making: if it is a deterrent, it will deter anyway and we do not need the precision of a tactical air-to-surface missile to deliver it. Our old enemy, Russia, already possessed our nuclear deterrent. We could have hit Chernobyl or any one of a dozen other such plants whenever we liked and vented destruction and catastrophe on that nation, and we could have done it with conventional weapons with laser precision. We do not need nuclear warheads on a TASM; we already have them in Polaris and will have them in greater strength in Trident. How many more times does the hon. Gentleman want to multiply them at a time when we are supposed to be actively involved in extending a nuclear non-proliferation treaty? Where is the logic in that?

I have not even begun to discuss what I came here to discuss. I cannot put a theme together in such a short time, because I must conclude soon.

**Hon. Members:** Sit down then.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Cook:** Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I appreciate your guardianship.

The Select Committee has just come back from Italy, where we saw the incredibly impressive results of the co-ordination between Agusta and Westland. The standard of workmanship and engineering on the EH101 is astonishingly good. I say that as an experienced engineer who used to work for Richardsons Westgarth, which was capable of the finest fine limits engineering.

As has already been said—it almost shot my fox—although we have ordered variants of the EH101, the Italian Government have yet to do so. I suggest to the Minister, if he can draw his attention from the documents that he is looking at, that he might write a letter to the Italian Government expressing our gratitude for bearing half the cost of the research and development on that helicopter. He should stress that it will make a superb contribution to the resource of the Royal Navy and draw attention to the fact that the Italians have not decided to acquire it. Such congratulations might be an incentive for the Italians to contribute further to the production and to make the helicopter—not just the military version, but the civil and search and rescue ones—even more attractive to other countries. I know that the Italians are seeking to extend their role in search and rescue.

**Mr. Colvin:** Does the hon. Gentleman agree that we are not just looking for purchasers of the EH101 from the United Kingdom—we know that we now have them—and from Italy, which we hope we will get, but we need the stamp of approval from both nations that are building the helicopter for it to succeed in selling to third countries? If Italy refrains from giving it that stamp of approval, other countries—for instance, Japan, which probably has the biggest and fastest expanding market for military and civilian helicopters—will hesitate before purchasing.

**Mr. Cook:** The hon. Gentleman shot my first fox earlier and I thank him for shooting my second one now. I agree with him, which saves my repeating the argument.

The attack helicopter, which has little to do with the RAF, but a lot to do with air power and strike power, is now under consideration. We saw a version of it this week, the 129, which is not on the tender lists in this country.

In reply to the hon. Member for Wyre, I say that as responsible politicians of whichever party—it is not a party political point—we have a moral responsibility to see to it that the young men and young women we send out to do our bidding, regardless of how sensible that bidding might be, have the right kind of equipment to do the job and receive the right training to use that equipment. Those men and women could be involved, as the hon. Gentleman said, in a high intensity conflict or in a lower profile activity, to which the hon. Gentleman made a rather demeaning and unfair reference. He spoke about "only peacekeeping". One does not refer to it in such terms, because peacekeeping is a most essential operation in today's world of greater instability. If we are not going to do it, who is? Do we leave it to others to sort it out? Do we wash our hands of all the slaughter that we see? Have we been to Bosnia?

We must not give our service men and women second-best. If we provide attack helicopters, we must have a weapons platform that is capable of hitting at the longest range, of inflicting great injury and of delivering the biggest punch. It must carry out that function with the greatest effect, having selected its targets with absolute accuracy. Frankly, only one aircraft could do that. There is only one helicopter that can fly from London to Bosnia, select 256 targets and take out 40 of them in one strike.

I shall close by quoting Lewis Mackenzie, the Canadian United Nations commander of Sarajevo. When he came out of Sarajevo, with all sorts of question marks hanging over him, especially over what he had said, he made a remark that struck home to me at an informal briefing of the Defence Select Committee in 1992. He said, "When you go into a knife-fight as a peacemaker, you don't go in with a knife—you go in with a bloody gun".

If we expect our young men and women to go to war on our behalf, we must ensure that they are trained with the best gun, and that they have the best gun in the homestead. There should be no half measures.

9.10 pm

**Lady Olga Maitland** (Sutton and Cheam): The publication of the defence estimates must come as a relief to our airmen. I am grateful to the Secretary of State for confirming that the size of our armed forces is stable and will remain so. That is the good news. The other side of the coin is alarming.

Our airmen now have every right to be deeply worried about where the Labour party stands on defence policy. They have a right to know, and what little they have learnt could only cause the deepest despondency. Much greater dangers lie ahead for them in the Labour party's proposals on defence than could ever have been the case when they worried about cuts in the past.

The time has come to place the Labour party under a severe spotlight on defence. The public have a right to be fully aware of what it believes. It is not a great deal. Will Labour really stand up for Britain's interests far and wide? Even if it wanted to, I very much doubt that it would have the capability.

I found it hard to take to hear the hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) weeping crocodile tears about the capability of the Royal Air Force. Would his party make a commitment to support the Eurofighter 2000? Would it update the Sea Harrier, the Nimrod? [HON. MEMBERS: "Yes."] Labour Members say that today, but I am certain that, come a Labour Government—God forbid that it happens—they would cancel it all.

Labour will always be shackled by the Labour party motions that have been passed every year since 1988, which have supported the reduction of British defence spending by £6 billion a year. That would be an insult to all our security responsibilities. In the end, Britain's role as a force for good would disappear; our commitments in Bosnia, Rwanda or other places far afield would be seriously jeopardised.

It is not valid to argue that we should reduce our defence spending to the western European average. We are not an average nation. We have much wider overseas interests and commitments to secure. Labour therefore tries to dodge the issue, demanding a defence review, destabilising the whole of our armed forces just when they are settling down. We are told by the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) that such a review would specifically match commitments to resources. Therein lies the truth. Labour will run down our defence capability to dangerous levels. It will not have the resources available to safeguard the national interest.

The RAF will be especially at risk. As the hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) said:

"The Labour party will consider our overseas commitments and the . . . role for the forces, including the RAF."—[*Official Report*, 27 January 1994; Vol. 236, c. 449.]

If that is not a threat, what is?

A future Labour Government will be met with heavy demands from powerful lobby groups who, in the interests of political correctness, will receive priority. It would be hard to envisage their refusing the disability lobby's demands for extra cash, even though there is ample provision today. Signing up to the social chapter and introducing a minimum wage will put thousands of people on the dole.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse):** Order. I would very much like to hear something about the Royal Air Force.

**Lady Olga Maitland:** The point that I am trying to make, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that Labour's threat to pour thousands of pounds into other areas means that there will not be sufficient resources for defence, let alone the RAF. The truth is that defence spending will fall.

We must look carefully at Labour's defence policy. It stands for nothing. The only firm views that we have heard so far from Labour Members are their views on homosexuality. Those views will delight Peter Tatchell of OutRage! and all the other gay rights groups—

**Mr. Henry Bellingham** (Norfolk, North-West): A poofter's charter.

**Lady Olga Maitland:** Stonewall, the lesbian and gay equality group, was thrilled, saying:

"this ban is widely recognised as cruel."

What will that do for the RAF, however?

**Mr. Eric Martlew** (Carlisle): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it right for the Minister's parliamentary private secretary to describe the Labour party's views as "a poofter's charter"?

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** I did not hear that. *[Interruption.]* However, I think I hear the hon. Member for Norfolk, North-West (Mr. Bellingham) saying that he did not make the remark. The Chair will accept that.

**Lady Olga Maitland:** The Labour party's policy on homosexuals appals everyone. Chiefs of the armed services have expressed deep concern, and I think that Labour should note what has been said. If this is the Labour party, it is hardly the stuff of serious government. Perhaps Labour should take the hint from President Clinton: when he tried to remove the ban on homosexuals and admit them to the armed services, he ran into a load of trouble with a furious debate that has not yet ended. Labour, however, seems to know better. Not surprisingly, its views have been condemned by respected figures in the armed services. I can only say that I think it disgraceful that a party that claims to be responsible for security and defence should have such a policy on homosexuality.

Our airmen deserve much more. They have a great history. They honoured us during the last war, and we owe them a great debt. The last thing that they need now is an undermining of their standing by the policies of the Labour party.

9.17 pm

**Dr. John Reid** (Motherwell, North): I shall attempt to raise the debate above the morass of primitive prejudice to which it seems to have sunk.

Approaching the Dispatch Box on occasions such as this, one has a genuine sense of humility and privilege. We realise how insignificant we are when we think that 50 years ago today our predecessors would have been debating not the comparatively minor issues that we have debated today, but the fall of Rangoon, the meeting of the fifth and seventh armies, the crossing of the Brenner pass and the advance on Berlin. At that time, we would have celebrated meeting our allies on the Elbe a few days ago, and looking forward to the "sunlit uplands" for which so many sacrificed their lives and on which so many hopes rested. That is the spirit in which we should approach today's debate, and—within the limits placed on us by traditional party antagonisms—I shall try to do so.

I apologise to the Minister for being unable to hear most of his speech. As he knows, I was collecting my mother and my aunt—my father's sister—for tomorrow's VE day celebrations. Like millions of people throughout

*[Dr. John Reid]*

the country, they lost kith and kin who were fighting in the armed services. We remember all those people tonight.

I welcome the Minister of State for the Armed Forces, who has been on a day trip to Germany with his chum. I am not cynical enough to say that if I were a Conservative Member and had been asked to work in the local elections I too would have chosen a locality in Germany. But the Minister's visit, with his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, was significant: I think that the presence of a member of the royal family, along with the Minister of State for the Armed Forces, will be widely appreciated, and is a measure of how far we have gone on those sunlit uplands—although we have not yet seen the full light of day.

The debate has raised a plethora of questions of both a strategic and a general nature. I will try to answer them all, but if I do not it is because I also wish to respond to some of the challenges that Conservative Members have issued. I always find the speeches of the hon. Member for Ruislip, Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson)—who unfortunately is not in his place—fascinating and informative, and tonight he raised one or two strategic issues to which I think we should give much thought.

The hon. Gentleman questioned the value of a sea-based sub-strategic nuclear system. I am not sure that I agree with his views, but the Labour party has considered that matter. More importantly, he raised the question of nuclear deterrents. In one sense, like the generals, Members of Parliament are always fighting the last war. We all accept that the nature of the risk and the threat has changed, but I do not think that hon. Members on either side of the House have applied themselves to the full implications that that will have for our nuclear deterrence policy.

The hon. Member for Ruislip, Northwood referred to the extension of ownership of intercontinental ballistic missiles. Rather than the 11,000 prospective Soviet missiles, we are now talking about maverick missiles in countries which did not have that capability previously. As the risk becomes more complex, we must pay further attention to that area. Significantly, the hon. Gentleman also mentioned anti-ballistic missile systems.

The important question of the balance between personnel management and war fighting was raised again. The hon. Member for Wyre (Mr. Mans) posed a problem which preoccupies us all: striking a balance between high and low intensity conflict. We must strike such a balance. As a member of the Security Council, we must fulfil our role on the world stage. We have a moral and a political imperative to retain the capacity for low intensity, peacekeeping operations. However, if our armed forces were applied only to peacekeeping operations, we would undermine our defence role and the first obligation of any Government: to defend their own shores, their dependent territories and their interests.

As always, the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) raised a number of interesting points, including the future of high standard training. I will return to his other points in a moment. My hon. Friend the Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond), who has always been a forceful advocate for his constituency, spoke out against the closure of RAF Finningley. In a very good speech, the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) mentioned the Cazalet report, which was issued a few days ago.

As to the report, my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) made the Labour party's position clear in various television interviews which the producers chose not to broadcast—mainly because they were not as sensational or as forceful in attacking individuals as some others. My hon. Friend spoke on behalf of the Labour party in broadly welcoming the report. The criticisms that he made were not levelled at any individuals or the officer group within the armed forces, but at the obvious deficiencies of financial management and control in the Ministry of Defence. I am glad to put that on the record.

I also record my admiration for the present and past officer corps in the British armed forces. It may amuse Conservative Members to hear me express my admiration for what was traditionally an officer class. However, I believe that they were the only members of the upper class who were prepared to make some sacrifices in return for the many privileges that they enjoyed. From a good class position, I express my admiration for the upper classes as represented in the British armed forces.

A number of hon. Members mentioned performance-related pay. I know that the Government will not take a blinkered view and say that, as it has been recommended, it must be accepted. For all the attractions of efficiency and cost-cutting, it must be obvious that simply to impose market-related performance pay on the armed forces is not only a dangerous precedent, but undermines and undervalues the reasons why so many people join the British armed forces—to serve their country—a much unappreciated and undervalued attitude today.

Search and rescue was mentioned by the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker), specifically the move from Leuchars and the delay in response time. A large number of issues were raised and the theme running through the debate was inefficiency and waste.

One speech which did not deal with that theme was that by my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen), who is not in his place. He spoke about land mines. We all agree about land mines, but my hon. Friend seeks a simple definition of a land mine which is so broad that it includes almost everything that lands or sits on the ground. The issue is more complex than he makes out.

The hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) mentioned Eurofighter. We have always supported Eurofighter, but we would not be doing our duty—and nor would Conservative Back-Bench Members—if we did not point out that it is two years behind schedule, it has overrun planned expenditure by £2,200 million and it is still dogged by difficulties. Raising those important questions does not diminish our commitment to Eurofighter.

There are political problems, because, as was mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew), after that overspend and delay, many of us would not be happy if the Germans, having reduced the number of Eurofighters that they ordered, were to insist on maintaining their 33 per cent. of production. According to convention and practice, we get production in accordance with the resale of the fighters that we buy. I see no reason why we should not stick to that precedent.

Mention was made of the Tornado midlife update, which is a classic example of the lack of financial control. It is now five years late; it is £270 million over budget for fewer aircraft than planned to a lower standard than envisaged. The Government cannot point to anyone who shares the responsibility for that, as they could for the Eurofighter.

We need a clear definition of the criteria for the Government selling off land. When the Minister of State for Defence Procurement was asked why the highest bid was not accepted, he said that money was not the only criterion, yet when he was questioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich (Mr. Cann) about the rather bizarre case of RAF Bentwater, which was sold off to the Maharishi Foundation, presumably as part of the transition from Tornado flying to yogic flying, the only excuse that the Minister gave was the money that we were to receive. We need a clearer definition.

A number of hon. Members mentioned overstretch. We should bear that issue in mind, particularly because it was examined by the Select Committee on Defence, several of whose members are here tonight. We commend them for making the effort to get here and speak.

The Select Committee on Defence issued a warning, saying that it was

"disturbed at the extent to which decisions on United Kingdom participation in military operations are henceforth to be distorted by the availability of scarce resources rather than taken primarily in the light of the dictates of national interests and international obligations."

We all must bear that in mind.

On market testing and contractorisation, once again I urge the Government to listen to what was said tonight and to the Select Committee, which recommended that

"any proposals . . . into future RAF support arrangements must have due regard to the operational needs of the front line for timely reinforcement and equipment support.".

It is fine to have the garage at the corner carrying out market-tested contractorisation during peace time because that will show enormous savings and will probably be reasonably efficient. To do that in circumstances of war or the prelude to war, or times of high tension, is another matter. I am sure that the Government would not find such an approach cost efficient in those circumstances. It would certainly not be operationally successful.

I have tried to do justice to the detailed criticisms that have been made. They have been heightened, naturally, by our style of parliamentary politics. I understand that defence is a polarised issue because it has served both parties well to debate it on that basis. Circumstances are arising, however, that facilitate and, indeed, necessitate a more consensual approach to our debates on defence and to defence itself.

The armed forces have enough enemies. There is no good purpose in having debates when one side of the House calls the other side warmongers and the response of the accused is to chant "appeasers". The reality is that we have all made mistakes. Despite their rhetoric, the Government have made substantial cuts. Some of the ideas that we, the Opposition, have advanced have grudgingly been accepted by the Government, often not publicly. Some of our ideas are gradually creeping into their thinking. It does not serve the armed forces well for us intentionally, for party political purposes, to continue to polarise defence issues.

**Mr. Gallie:** It is all very well for the hon. Gentleman to make such statements. I recognise that his commitment to defence is wholehearted and that over the years his words have been pretty consistent. In the main, however, the Members who sit behind him—this is true especially of the annual conferences of the Labour party—continually undermine the hon. Gentleman's words. It is difficult for us to accept his words now.

**Dr. Reid:** When the hon. Gentleman was saying that about the Labour party conference in 1988—that Labour was calling for huge defence expenditure cuts of up to 30 per cent. and that it should be reduced to the European average—he expressed great criticism. The reality is that the Government have done what the Labour party was urging. The Government have reduced defence expenditure by 30 per cent. Defence expenditure has been reduced over 10 years to 2.8 per cent. of overall expenditure, which in 1988 was the average for our European allies.

I am asking only for an absence of hypocrisy. Let us admit that the Government have cut defence expenditure massively. They have cut it like no other element of their budget. I see Conservative Members nodding in agreement. What I have stated is a fact. If we can begin to get rid of party political sloganising and paranoia, perhaps we can adopt a more consensual approach.

We welcome parts of the Statement on the Defence Estimates, for example, the explicit statement that foreign policy is becoming increasingly interlinked—"interleaved" is the word used on page 9 of the statement—with defence policy. We, the Opposition, have been saying that that is one of the three elements of a defence review. We welcome the Government's recognition of that.

We say also that there are two other elements that have not been recognised. One of those elements is the strategic industrial nature of the British defence industry. The second is the matching of resources and commitments. Without sufficient study, analysis and ammunition, we shall have no strategic argument to deploy from the Ministry of Defence whenever the Treasury comes knocking on the door, as it will after the general election, whichever party is in power. The MOD will, in those circumstances, be unable to resist the Treasury's whims. I ask Conservative Members to accept that a full defence review is not a recipe for the Treasury taking money. That has happened anyway. It is a recipe for the strategic ammunition to argue against it happening.

As for the Labour party having no policy, it is not true. Labour Members have argued with the Government over policy issue after policy issue. We argued that we needed more infantry. The Government said that we were wrong and then they were forced to make a U-turn and accept that we needed more infantry. We argued that it was a waste of money, in the harsh financial circumstances, to spend up to £2,000 million on a new tactical air-to-surface missile. The Government said that we were wrong. We said that we were right. Two years later, the Government did a U-turn and accepted that we were right.

We argued that, in the spirit of the approach to non-proliferation, the Government should consider decommissioning the WE177 nuclear bomb. They said

*[Dr. Reid]*

that we were wrong; we were appeasers; we were all in CND. Three years later, the Government accepted that we were right and they did another U-turn. We told the Government that they were wrong in their personnel policy towards pregnant women. Just as we saw tonight, the primitive prejudices came out and Conservatives Members told us that we could not possibly be right about that. That decision has taken £47.5 million out of an already overstretched defence budget and it was all because the Government would not accept that the traditions of prejudice could be overcome by some European-wide legislation.

Incidentally, one of the main reasons why we want to look at the issue of homosexuality is to prevent a similar problem from occurring. I see several Conservative Members nodding. Let me repeat that we in the Labour party have never given the green light to homosexual activity, conduct or relationships in the armed forces. It is a malicious misrepresentation to suggest that. We fully accept the particular conditions of the armed forces and that homosexual, indeed, in some circumstances heterosexual, relationships, can undermine and be prejudicial to good order and morale. However we also accept that because the present policy discriminates against the person and not their conduct, activity or relationships, it is being taken through the courts and may leave us wide open to exactly the sort of claims of discrimination as were made by pregnant women.

Conservative Members may not want to review the situation, but I can tell them that we will review it on that basis. We do not want to introduce relationships that will undermine good order and morale, but we want to ensure that the armed forces cannot be accused of discrimination against persons. I will tell Conservative Members another thing. The Ministry of Defence, under this Government, is conducting a review as well. Therefore while the policy is being reviewed by the MOD, it is sheer hypocrisy for Conservative Members to pluck at their primitive prejudices. In this case, prejudice, not patriotism, is the last refuge of scoundrels in such an important debate.

Finally, I shall give Conservative Members some policies. I have outlined our policies already, but still more is demanded.

"it is impossible for an Opposition to draw up a detailed and fully-costed defence policy when in Opposition."

It cannot be done. Hon. Members should not demand the impossible.

"Such a process can be carried out only after full consultation with the Services, with our Allies and with industry."—[*Official Report*, 31 March 1976; Vol. 908, c. 1353.]

Those are not my words. I was quoting the words of Sir Ian Gilmour, the Conservative defence spokesman in 1976. I hope that we can let that matter rest.

To end in the spirit in which we started, tomorrow is VE day and VJ day. Tomorrow we shall commemorate the end of the war. Let us not be accused of forgetting the forgotten army once again. I say to those of us for whom responsibility has passed that it may serve us all well—the RAF and our armed forces—if, somehow in the present conditions, we could try to attain some measure of agreement. The legacy of those who struggled, to whom it was not given to live through those awful yet glorious days, passes to us and we bear a heavy burden of responsibility on our shoulders. Let us hope that all of us, on all sides of the House, can so bear ourselves—if I may put it that way—as to discharge that responsibility in a manner that does justice to our predecessors.

9.39 pm

**The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Nicholas Soames):** It is always a great pleasure to listen to the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) on these occasions. It is a source of great angst to my hon. Friends and to me that he does not sit on the Government side of the House. Indeed, he must feel the same.

**Mr. Cohen:** He will sit over there after the next election.

**Mr. Soames:** I would not bank on that.

As is so often the case, this has been a stimulating and wide-ranging debate. A number of wider defence issues have been touched upon, not surprisingly in view of the publication yesterday of the annual Defence White Paper. I shall do my best to answer the points that have been raised. If I do not do that in the time that the hon. Member for Motherwell, North has kindly and generously allotted to me, I will write to hon. Members.

I should like first to take up the theme with which the hon. Member for Motherwell, North started his speech in such a genuinely moving manner. Tomorrow we begin our commemorations of the end of the second world war. It is fitting to remember the RAF's contribution to secure peace in 1945, a peace that was hard won with more than 70,000 of our young air men killed in action. Their sacrifice helped to ensure the freedom that we have enjoyed since and that perhaps we now so often take for granted.

The hon. Member for Motherwell, North was good enough to mention the visit that the Prince of Wales made yesterday to Hamburg. That was a very moving and extraordinary occasion. When he went to lay a wreath at the Commonwealth war graves in the Ohlsdorf cemetery, knowing that I was going to speak in this debate today, I came across the grave of Sergeant J. A. Ward, a holder of the Victoria Cross at the age of 22. He was killed on 15 September 1941. He was a member of the Royal New Zealand air force attached to a Royal Air Force squadron and he lies between Britons, Canadians and Australians. Truly we have a great deal of remembering to do this weekend.

The themes of this weekend's events will include a thanksgiving for the end of the war, 50 years of peace and reconciliation in Europe and the benefits that the wartime generation, through their toil, service and sacrifice, won for us.

More than 50 Heads of State representing those countries that contributed major formations to the war in the European theatre on either side of the conflict will meet in London to mark the occasion. There will be three days of ceremonies, performances and exhibitions in Hyde park, culminating in the lighting of a beacon by Her Majesty the Queen on VE night, Monday 8 May.

A fitting centrepiece to the commemorations will be the service in St. Paul's cathedral on Sunday. At the same time, the Government have sponsored events which will take place in Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast. The House will pay what I am sure will be a very moving tribute of its own tomorrow.

The RAF will provide its own unique contribution to the VE day commemorations with every type of operational aircraft participating in more than 100 events

throughout the United Kingdom. As for the Government programme, the battle of Britain memorial flight and the Red Arrows will be in the skies over London. The sight of RAF uniforms and the sound of RAF bands will be much in evidence on the ground and, in view of the tremendous and almost overwhelming support that the air cadets have rightly received tonight, I am particularly pleased to tell the House that the air cadets will also be heavily involved in the commemorations.

Veterans all over the land and, I am sure and hope, many young people, will mark the anniversary in their own towns, cities and villages and remember with us the great debt that we owe. I draw the attention of the House to just one of those events outside London. The special ceremony at the United States war cemetery at Cambridge will remember those members of the US air force stationed at bases throughout East Anglia who lost their lives flying so many day-time raids, particularly in the period leading up to the Normandy landings.

Mention of the United States air force brings to mind the many other allies with whom the RAF worked during the second world war. The wartime RAF was a force that included many nationalities. Among the most famous squadrons were the Polish and Czech squadrons of which my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) spoke so movingly. At the very gate of his constituency stands an incredibly beautiful memorial to them. One of the welcome benefits of the end of the cold war has been that the RAF is now able to rebuild closer ties with the air forces of those countries.

There were, however, also Belgian, Dutch, French, Greek, Norwegian and Yugoslav squadrons and, of course, the very many from the Commonwealth who fought and died in the air battle. It is entirely appropriate, therefore, that this weekend's commemorations will have a thoroughly international flavour.

The Royal Air Force of 1995 may be vastly different from that of 1945 in many respects, but today's service still maintains the devotion to duty, the professionalism, the determination and the ethos that characterised the service's contribution to the second world war and helped to establish an enduring peace between the major powers.

In the six years of that war, air power grew from adolescence to maturity. Fifty years on, air power continues to provide an ultimate insurance in high-intensity conflict and increasing flexibility for peace support operations. I wholly endorse the sentiment expressed by the hon. Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook) on the question of peacekeeping operations. Incidentally, the reason why British troops, our Air Force and, indeed, the Navy are so very good at such operations is that they are trained to fight in high-intensity conflicts. It is only by training to keep those standards that we shall continue to be able to meet our obligations.

We should not let anyone say that peacekeeping is a soft option. What is happening in Bosnia now represents a difficult and challenging form of soldiering made all the more difficult by the requirement to exercise constant and almost unbelievable restraint.

**Mr. Robert Key** (Salisbury): Other members of the Select Committee on Defence and I have just returned from Naples where we briefed at NATO headquarters. I wish to put on record our gratitude to the men and women of the Royal Air Force who are playing their part in the conflict to which my hon. Friend referred. May I also point out that we have a new ally in Italy, and it is becoming increasingly strange that Italy is not a member of the contact group. As we shall rely increasingly and almost exclusively on Italy in that enterprise, I hope that my hon. Friend will consider that fact.

**Mr. Soames:** I thought that my hon. Friend had been to Italy because of the colour of his trousers. I take his point and will bear it in mind when the contact group and associated discussions come about again.

The Royal Air Force meets the vital requirement for mobility and the rapid projection of power. Its inherent flexibility makes it well qualified to react to a broad range of contingencies. The RAF today has a proud tradition to maintain, a tradition that was forged in the skies of Europe, Africa and Asia and that continues daily, most visibly in the skies over Bosnia and Iraq.

I know that Opposition Members are always amused by the fact that, whenever I speak, I catalogue the places where I have visited our armed forces, so I shall not let them down this time. I have just returned from visiting British forces deployed in Italy, although I restrained myself in my trouserwear.

I visited the aircraft carrier Illustrious in the Adriatic and the various deployments in Yugoslavia. As always, I was hugely impressed, as hon. Members of all parties have been, by the commitment and dedication of the service men and women and the civilians who work alongside them.

I was struck by the progress that had been made at Gioia del Colle since my previous visit there. There is no doubt that, with the increased experience of the operating environment, the Royal Air Force organisation at the base has become extremely impressive. I met the ground crews and support staff, who sustain the Tornados and Jaguars in their very important roles.

Since April 1993, when the Jaguars and Tornados started operations at Gioia del Colle, the Tornados have flown more than 2,300 operational sorties, the Jaguars more than 2,800. They are doing a wonderful job, and I know that the whole House will wish to pay a warm tribute to them.

I would also like to take this opportunity, in the spirit that my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) mentioned, to pay a warm tribute to our Italian hosts. It is quite plain that they value and enjoy the presence of the Royal Air Force. No trouble has been too much for them. I am extremely grateful particularly to the base commander and his immediate staff for all their kindness, help and support for the British forces, which is greatly appreciated.

We should also remember the wonderful work that the Hercules detachment has been doing from Ancona. Since February 1992, it has dropped 24,000 tonnes of humanitarian aid in more than 1,700 sorties. Two TriStar tankers provide air-to-air refuelling. Royal naval and allied aircraft taking part in operations over the former Yugoslavia are sustained by them, while sentry aircraft fly from Aviano in northern Italy, as part of the NATO airborne early warning force monitoring the air exclusion zone over Bosnia.

*[Mr. Soames]*

The RAF has also played an important part in the crisis in Rwanda, and has helped to deploy our troops to Angola. In fact, not a single front-line operational aircraft in the Royal Air Force has not been deployed somewhere in the world on operations.

**Mr. Hardy:** Will the Minister give way?

**Mr. Soames:** If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I shall not give way. I am trying to deal with the points that have been raised.

The value placed on those prolonged and demanding activities by the international community is testament both to the efficiency of the Royal Air Force and to the commitment and efforts of those who serve in it. That ethos of dedication and professionalism binds aircrew support staff and their families, and forms the very backbone of the Royal Air Force.

I pay particular tribute to the families of those who are deployed overseas. They make real sacrifices, and the Government recognise and understand the difficulties that separation can cause. We have a firm commitment to try to bring a greater stability in order to shorten such separations. Certainly, the Jaguar squadrons at Coltishall, for example, have had an extraordinarily demanding year and have spent a great deal of time away.

Closer to home, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Royal Air Force, as you will know only too well, continues to provide the most splendid support in Northern Ireland. Although the ceasefire arrangements are to be welcomed and have allowed some relaxation of our security arrangements, it remains necessary to maintain a high state of vigilance.

I am pleased to be able to tell the House that, as a result of the ceasefire, for the first time in 25 years, RAF Aldergrove will hold an open day for members of the public at the end of May, and the Queen's Colour Squadron will parade through the streets of Belfast.

Since RAF matters were previously debated in the House, we have had the "Front Line First" exercise, to which several hon. Members have referred. For the RAF, it has meant a period of very extensive and profound change. It has meant that some airfields that have played a prominent role in the past, such as Scampton and Finningley, will close and flying training will be concentrated at four stations. We now no longer need two RAF bases in Germany, and the Harriers and support helicopters currently based at RAF Laarbruch will be redeployed.

We do not underestimate the very hard work that is required at all levels if the ambitious targets that have been set are to be achieved. I have been fortunate to visit a large number of Royal Air Force establishments, at both command and unit level, and have been hugely impressed by the attitude and quality that I have seen.

In the time remaining, I propose to try to deal with some of the points that have been made. I start by thanking the hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) for his gracious and kind words about my presence at the Dispatch Box. Indeed, it is genuinely a source of huge pride that, 50 years on, I should be able to speak in this debate from the Dispatch Box. I also warmly endorse the hon. Gentleman's views on the quality of our aircraft, and I join his tributes to Dowding and Harris. I also join his warm and handsome tribute to all those who serve in the Royal Air Force.

My right hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement will write to the hon. Gentleman about the questions that he asked on the procurement side, about the European fighter aircraft and Tornado, although he has already dealt with some of those points. The hon. Gentleman also asked about search and rescue, with which I shall have to deal at greater length in a letter. I shall write him one tomorrow.

I accept the anxieties that we all have about the Bett report, but the whole point of that report is that it is a Green Paper. Nothing in Bett is cast in tablets of stone. There is still a great deal of work to be done on it—but no one should be deceived into thinking that there is any element in it that is not worthy of the most serious, worthwhile, hard work and staffing to find out whether its recommendations are suitable for our services. I believe that the report represents a sensible way forward in many respects, although plainly there will be areas that we are less happy about than others.

I do not wish to break the consensus in the debate, but the remarks of the hon. Member for Carlisle about the attitude of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence in his dealings with Sir Sandy Wilson were wholly strange to the truth—I shall say no more than that. I shall deal in more detail with Sir Sandy Wilson when I respond to the hon. Gentleman, so I am afraid that I cannot say such warm words about the end of his speech as I did about the beginning.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Northavon (Sir J. Cope), who is extremely knowledgeable about the aviation industry, praised my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement for the successful policies that he has put in place to sustain the defence industrial base.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Northavon also spoke about the university air squadrons. I am well aware of his close interest in that subject. He and I have engaged in a protracted correspondence about it, and I have high hopes that if that continues we may yet be able to have a meeting to discuss the matter. Work is in hand to find out whether greater cost-effectiveness and efficiency can be achieved in the air squadrons, and I take note of what my right hon. Friend said. I assure him that we have much detailed work to do yet, and that I shall ensure that his views are fed in.

I understand the views and feelings of the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) about RAF Finningley. He was good enough to bring a delegation to see me, and we had an interesting conversation. I listened carefully to what the delegation said and I assure the hon. Gentleman that our people will work closely with the local authorities to come up with what I hope will be the best solution for Finningley. I greatly regret that such historic stations are being caught up in the great sweep of change that is taking place, and I praise the hon. Gentleman for his vigorous fight to try to retain Finningley.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter) was good enough to take the trouble to alert me this morning to some of the points that he intended to raise. If I may, I shall deal with some of them by correspondence. The findings of the board of inquiry into

the tragic Chinook accident are still under consideration, and a summary of findings will be published in due course, but not until they have been carefully considered and the next of kin informed.

My hon. Friend also mentioned ALFENS—the automated low flying planning enquiry and notification system. Again, I shall write to him about that. He then talked about separation and stability, both of which are matters that exercise us greatly. He also referred to the Bett report, and I hope that he will feel that I have already dealt with that. Of course, I wholly endorse the tribute that he paid to the Royal Air Force.

As usual, the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) made an extremely good and well-informed speech. As the Member of Parliament for Leuchars, he knows a great deal about the RAF. I endorse the tribute that he paid to the work and the report of Sir Peter Cazalet. The hon. and learned Gentleman's speech was knowledgeable, and what he said about the role that the RAF would play in the event of a withdrawal from Bosnia is most important. I take all his points about the essential balance on civilianisation, concerning the need to get it right and not to go too far. Indeed, I wholly endorse all the views that he expressed on that subject. I shall write to him about the changing tactics that have evolved since the Gulf war.

As one would expect, my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) paid a warm tribute to the Royal Air Force. Understandably, he has concerns about the defence costs studies. I shall leave his questions about procurement matters to my right hon. Friend, but plainly I take to heart what he said about RAF training. He is a commissioned RAF officer and I note what he said. He believes that there are high risks, and plainly it is true that we take risks with some of those decisions. I am grateful for the support of my hon. Friend on low flying, and it is extremely good that people are prepared to put their money where their mouths are. I noted also my hon. Friend's remarks about Bett and overstretch.

The hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) made an extremely well-informed speech—as one would expect from a former RAF service man—as did my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood. I noted my hon. Friend's warm tribute to the Poles and the Czechs, and I agree. Other hon. Members made distinguished contributions to this debate with which, I am afraid, I do not have time to deal. It was a pleasure, however, to welcome those members of the Select Committee who managed to come back in time. I was glad that they got here.

The RAF faces huge challenges, as it has done in the past. We are supremely conscious that we owe the RAF a great debt of gratitude, and we will continue to support it in every way we can. The nation can be proud that it has such a splendid RAF.

*It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.*

## Water Charges (South-West)

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

10 pm

**Mr. Matthew Taylor** (Truro): This is the fifth occasion on which Ministers have been forced to the House to respond to a Liberal Democrat-initiated debate on the water bills crisis in the south-west. Ministers have been required to respond to debates so often—despite their promises of reviews, consultations and even action—because the problem of unaffordable bills is still with us in the south-west.

In the previous Adjournment debate which I obtained on this matter more than a year ago, I said that residents in the South West Water area were being hit by a crisis, and were struggling to pay the highest water bills in England and Wales. The average bill for the region for that year was £304. The problem has not gone away, and the average bill is now £322, with many customers—often pensioners—having to meet bills of £600 or £700.

Nor has the anger in the south-west subsided. In March this year, the chair of the South West Water consumers committee, Jessica Thomas, reported that her office had been deluged with calls from dismayed South West Water customers who had expected cuts in their bills following Government statements. She said:

"We have had more angry and abusive calls in the last fortnight than at any time since our office opened."

Ministers have developed three excuses for the problem. First, they say that they could not have predicted it, either at the time of privatisation or when they set higher standards for the clean-up. Secondly, it is not their fault, and it is down to Ofwat to take action or to Europe. Thirdly, they are reviewing matters, and we should pay now in the hope that things will be sorted out next year. I call the latter the "never-never land" excuse.

Let us take each of those excuses in turn, starting with the first. The Government were warned about this. On 8 December 1988—during the final stages of water privatisation—I told the House:

"I represent an area where people are on low incomes, where some villages do not yet have their own sewerage systems and where many beaches are polluted. It is they who will have to foot the bill for the improvements that are required."

I also warned that both future British Government funding and much European funding would be cut off following privatisation, a statement which has been confirmed subsequently by the European Commission. I continued:

"I hope that the Minister can assure the people of Cornwall that they will not be expected to meet all the cost of cleaning up the beaches, which are used by citizens of the United Kingdom and Europe, purely because the Government, by their ideological approach, are cutting off the potential to obtain money in other ways."—[*Official Report*, 8 December 1988; Vol. 143, c. 535-536.]

Yet none of the Conservative Members in the region—who are now wringing their hands as they lose votes due to rising water bills—joined me in opposing the Water Act 1989. By February 1989, the proposed increase for South West Water customers was 13.1 per cent in a single year. Such was my concern that I then sought and got an Easter Adjournment debate on water and servicing in the south-west. That was more than six years ago, yet Ministers now say that they could not see the problem coming.

*[Mr. Matthew Taylor]*

With the Conservative Government refusing to help, further increases in bills inevitably followed, as night follows day. After all, just 3 per cent. of the national population—those living in the south-west—are being forced to pay for more than 30 per cent. of the national coastal clean-up.

In July 1990, I initiated a further Adjournment debate, after a new Government announcement that they were bringing forward the clean-up programme dramatically, which saw much the same response. They were bringing forward extra requirements on the water companies, but they were not increasing the so-called "green dowry" allowed to companies at the time of privatisation to meet some of the costs of the environmental obligations on them.

The 1990 proposals came not from Europe, but from the then Minister responsible for the environment, Mr. Chris Patten, who is perhaps fortunate to be Governor of Hong Kong rather than having any role in Devon and Cornwall, where he might get an even worse reception than the one that he is getting out in Hong Kong. He estimated the cost at £1.5 billion. The real cost of his initiative proved to be £6 billion.

That brings me to the second excuse—that it is someone else's fault, particularly Europe's. Not only is it a fact that European standards could be set only with the agreement of British Ministers, who had a right to veto them, but the British Government decided to increase and speed up the clean-up in 1990, and to do so without proper costings, or any financial support for those areas that would be hardest hit.

In 1989, the European Community had proposed the municipal waste water treatment directive—precursor to what is now the urban waste water directive—but it was not agreed by the EC until 1991. In 1990, the United Kingdom Government not only brought forward the beach clean-up, but jumped the gun on the municipal waste water treatment proposals by unilaterally adopting them for immediate application. I stress again that they did so without offering any financial support for the area to be hardest hit—the south-west.

That fact, which Conservative Members, especially those in the south-west, have denied—that it was their initiative that was at fault, not that of the EC—is confirmed by the fourth report of the Select Committee on the Environment, which was published in December 1990. Although I have brought it to the attention of the House before, I have never had any response.

In the introduction to its response to the Select Committee, the Department stated:

"the Government decided to press its own review to a conclusion and not to await the results of the committees' deliberations . . . In March the Government announced a major change of policy to require higher standards of treatment before sewage is discharged to sea. The Secretary of State for the Environment said that in future all significant discharges of sewage to sea should first be treated at a sewage treatment works: the additional cost associated with this change was put at around £1.5 billion".

That was a wild under-estimate, as we now know.

I must re-emphasise that it was a Government decision, not a European one. Indeed, the introduction to the response to the Select Committee concluded:

"Government policies in this area are in advance of Community environmental policy development as contained in the draft EC Directive on Municipal Waste Water Treatment which is currently the subject of negotiation. This Directive if adopted will establish uniform minimum standards throughout the EC. The Government strongly supports this draft Directive and is working towards its early adoption."

In other words, they were pushing Europe to bring the directive forward as fast as possible, and we know the results for South West Water consumers.

I do not criticise the environmental objectives, but I do criticise those who seek to escape the Government's responsibility for those decisions, and those who failed to foresee the impact on South West Water consumers.

Yet, while the Conservative Government set the standard, they insisted that the customers should meet the costs. The Minister who replied to the 1990 Adjournment debate concluded:

"It is much better for private companies to raise money from charges to customers. The Government apply that system generally, and Cornwall will be no exception."—[*Official Report*, 16 July 1990; Vol. 176, c. 842.]

Well, we were not. As a result, the Director General of Water Services announced that South West Water bills would increase, not at 6.5 per cent. a year over inflation as planned after privatisation, but 11.5 per cent. plus inflation each year.

The fact that prices have doubled in the past five years is, in every way, the Government's responsibility. Not surprisingly, the result was big advances for the Liberal Democrats in the general election in the south-west. The *Western Morning News* reported:

"MPs returning to Westminster after the election have spoken of widespread anger and concern on the doorstep over soaring water bills."

One of the beneficiaries of that anger, my hon. Friend the newly elected Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler), pressed the matter in another Adjournment debate at the beginning of June 1992. By that stage, Conservative Members were belatedly backing our concern, but the Secretary of State remained dismissive, describing South West Water's rising charges as

"good value to a household".—[*Official Report*, 2 June 1992; Vol. 208, c. 805.]

That view is not prevalent among those who must pay those charges.

When I raised the issue with the Prime Minister on 4 March the following year, he wrongly argued that I would find that water prices

"are similar in other counties to those in the west country."—[*Official Report*, 4 March 1993; Vol. 220, c. 451.].

The message about the scale of the problem had not got outside the west country, but it did so as a result of the angry reaction to what the Prime Minister had said on people's television screens at Prime Minister's Questions, which many people in the west country had seen in the ensuing news programmes, which gave the figures and revealed that he was simply wrong.

Following that outcry, the Prime Minister gave a more positive response when I questioned him a week later. He said:

"I am examining the matter with the Secretary of State for the Environment."—[*Official Report*, 11 March 1993; Vol. 220, c. 1105.]

That was the start of the third excuse—that something might be done, but, to adapt a phrase as we approach VE day, "don't know where, don't know when". It was not so much an excuse as a muddle.

By April, the Prime Minister was writing to Conservative Members to tell them that there were "difficulties" in bringing down bills. Meanwhile, the Environment Minister disclaimed responsibility, arguing in a letter to south-west Liberal Democrats on 27 April:

"Responsibility for water charges rests with the Director General of Water Services";

and denying that they were considering a review of water prices. He even refused to meet to discuss the issue.

The Director General of Ofwat, Ian Byatt, was reported at almost the same time—on 7 May 1993—as confirming that

"only the Government can stop South West Water bills spiralling . . . He said price limits were based on environmental obligations laid down by the Government, and he had little room for manoeuvre."

Last April, the constant delays, excuses and confusion from Ministers led me once again to try to get a proper response from the Minister in another Adjournment debate. Since then, the Government have developed another excuse—excuse No. 4—that action has been taken, the problem has been resolved, and the rise in bills has been capped. No sooner was the excuse made than it too began to unravel. A year on, even Conservative Members admit that the crisis continues, as one west country Conservative Member said within the past couple of weeks.

First, we are told that the Secretary of State accepted advice from Conservative Members that only a substantial cash injection into the south-west coastal clean-up—a second "green dowry"—would bring bills down to the national average. That is the position that we have argued all along, yet we are told, in the words of the *Western Morning News* on 13 March this year:

"his request for £100 million from the Treasury last year was turned down flat".

As a result, bills are not being cut and they continue to rise. Conservative Members in the region, and even the Secretary of State, accept that yearly bills of £600 or £700 with no relief for pensioners, or those on low incomes or living alone, are literally unaffordable. Many bills are already at that level.

Secondly, unable to offer a cut in bills, the Minister cut the clean-up programme, to slow the rate of increase. That, however, does nothing to cut bills. It does not tackle the fundamental problem, which is that they have already been allowed to get too high.

Even that policy has begun to unravel, because the NRA has overturned the Minister's ruling and said that substantial parts of the schemes must, after all, still go ahead, with the extra costs to the consumers still to be calculated. In any case, South West Water is challenging the price increase limits imposed on it, and I am advised that it may well win the case. What will Ministers do then, given that bills are already unaffordable?

Thirdly, in an extraordinary decision, sneaked out just before Easter, Ministers announced that water bills would still be calculated according to the out-of-date rates system—a system abandoned in the 1980s for local government because it was judged out of date and unfair.

Liberal Democrats and many water companies have suggested using the council tax system to calculate water bills, so that, even if bills could not be cut, they might be based on modern valuations, and help offered to those living alone or on low incomes. If rates were judged unfair and outdated for council use in the 1980s, how can that system be acceptable to Conservatives for calculating water charges in the 1990s?

Finally, it emerged that, this year, Ofwat would cut bills for business and the minority of customers with meters, by increasing the bills of everyone else—the vast majority—well above the inflation rate, yet again. Worse still, the same principle could mean different charges for ordinary customers who are cheap to supply—those in cities—at the expense of rural customers.

On 22 March, *Western Morning News* reported:

"Water consumers in remote and rural areas of the South West could soon be facing even higher bills because they are more expensive to supply."

The newspaper revealed that, on the basis of Ian Byatt's comments, the water regulator—frankly, he raises economics to a fine art, but he does little to meet the needs of the consumers who are on the receiving end—Labour-controlled Plymouth city council was prepared to bring a test case, demanding lower charges in the city on the basis that it was cheaper to supply, like large businesses. That would mean higher bills for rural customers.

The Labour chairman of the city's housing committee, John Coyle, confirmed:

"We are investigating the legal position. The early indications look like we will be able to go forward with a case to bring down water bills for every city resident."

Ofwat admits that such a challenge would be "a difficult case". If water tariffs were broken down between urban and rural groups, it would provoke outrage in areas where bills were forced up—the rural areas that have already been hit. Ofwat's south-west consumers' representative, Jessica Thomas, said that she was extremely worried at any moves that would hit rural customers.

Conservative policies have hit people in the rural south-west in many ways. Our schools are allowed £100 per child less than the average for England, and business gets less support than in any other region, despite high unemployment and low wages, but water bills are the most clear-cut example of unfairness. The Conservative party is reaping the reward it deserves: electoral defeat after electoral defeat.

At the general election, rising water bills meant Liberal Democrat gains. They delivered us victories in the county elections, and helped us to win our first European seats. Tonight, as the early local government results come in, it is clear that the Conservative party is losing over and over again in the south-west local elections.

The Minister has to answer the following questions. Why did the Treasury refuse to cut water bills, despite the Conservatives' own Secretary of State for the Environment asking for £100 million to do that? What will the Conservative Government do if the NRA requires the clean-up to go ahead, as it has, and South West Water possibly wins its appeal on the price cap and bills start to shoot up again?

What does the Minister say to customers without meters—the majority—whose bills have gone up well above inflation again this year, despite Government promises, while big businesses have had their bills cut? Will the Conservatives just stand by if Ofwat allows those living in the cities to have their bills cut at the expense of higher bills for customers in rural Cornwall and Devon?

If the Minister cannot answer those questions, he cannot expect Conservative fortunes to revive. He should expect a rout of the Conservative party, once again, come the general election.

10.18 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Sir Paul Beresford):** I thought that the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) was going to go on for so long that I would not get a word in.

The hon. Gentleman has attempted to prove himself the knight in shining armour, but that posture is rather misplaced. The people who have been working in the south-west are my right hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery), my hon. Friends the Members for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls), for Cornwall, South-East (Mr. Hicks), for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson), for Exeter (Sir J. Hannam), for South Hams (Mr. Steen), for St. Ives (Mr. Harris), for Plymouth, Drake (Dame J. Fookes), for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Streeter), for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson), for Tiverton (Mrs. Browning), for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe) and for Torbay (Mr. Allason), just to mention the key players.

They have striven—*[Interruption.]*—perhaps the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) would listen, bearing in mind that I have sat quietly and listened to his version of the story—for a balance of better standards, which we definitely need in the region, and for the keeping down of costs in the long term.

Even the hon. Gentleman will accept that, after years of neglect under the previous Labour Administration, a massive programme of capital investment was required to modernise and upgrade the water and sewerage infrastructure in the region. That need would have arisen regardless of whether the industry had remained in the private sector or was privatised, and it would have been reflected to some degree in the water charges.

However, what water privatisation has done—the hon. Gentleman will be unable to reflect on that because he will not even see it—is to allow the companies access to the financial markets, which has helped South West Water to fund its investment programme. South West Water has made enormous strides in improving the infrastructure in the first four years.

About 400 individual schemes, totalling £760 million, have been completed. In 1992-93 and 1993-94, investment was running at £200 million a year. In the six months to 30 December 1994, a further £78 million was invested; 50 major schemes were completed, 377 were on-going. They were all the type of schemes that had been demanded by the Conservatives and by the Liberal Democrats in the region.

The company has borrowed extensively to finance that programme and, at 31 March 1994, loans and financial obligations amounted to an enormous £507 million. That means that financing was predominantly through loans, which spread the costs over time to the customers.

Even the hon. Member for Truro must accept that that huge capital programme, by enabling better water quality and higher environmental standards, has removed 100 restrictions on commercial and residential development. That has meant a dramatic increase in the customer base, and by that I mean an increase in industry and households in the region. It has helped the economy in the region and it has spread the tax base and the cost base. For instance, in 1993-94, there was an increase of 5,000 customers for South West Water. The overall economic benefit to the region has also meant, as I have said, an increase in the spread of the financial load.

The Government and my hon. Friends have been acutely aware of the rate of increase in charges, and we have carefully considered means by which we can keep those down. The first and most logical approach of the Government has been to try to clarify the new water quality and environment obligations, which all the water companies must meet in the next 10 years.

The Government, backed by my hon. Friends, have been emphatic that, in meeting the requirements of existing European Community and domestic legislation, the water companies, including South West Water, must achieve that as efficiently and possible. There needs to be a major effort by the companies to manage their investment programme at the lowest costs appropriate to circumstances. To put it simply, the company must avoid any "goldplating" of schemes, and must ensure that opportunities for cost reduction of technical innovation are not overlooked.

In addition, an important policy statement—"Water Charges: The Quality Framework"—which the Secretary of State for the Environment published in 1993, drew attention to the crucial role of the drinking water regulators. By that I mean the National Rivers Authority and the drinking water inspectorate. They are required to avoid excessive regulatory caution and not to demand too heavily that discretionary improvements are proceeded with at an excessive rate.

In addition, the Government remain committed to continuing to pursue, with their partners in the European Community, the case for deferring some of the urban waste water treatment directive's deadlines, so as to be able to implement the directive at a pace that consumers throughout the Community, especially South West Water customers, can more easily afford.

South West Water customers will be aware that the company has an extensive bathing water programme—also the sort of thing campaigned for and supported by Conservatives, and pushed by that double-horsed, two-faced reaction of the Liberals. That is well under way. It includes 24 schemes, covering 55 bathing waters. Nine of those schemes, involving 21 bathing waters, have already been completed. In other words, the bulk of them are on the way, if not completed. The effect is that we estimate that almost all those schemes will be completed by the end of the year.

The hon. Member for Truro should be interested to note that the recently completed Mount's bay section, which is a substantial scheme, linking St. Ives on Cornwall's north coast with Penzance on the south coast, is already having a dramatic effect on the quality of bathing waters, which formerly had nearly the worst compliance record in the United Kingdom. As an example, a local newspaper drew attention to the fact that windsurfers competing in Mount's bay during the Easter weekend said that the water was so much cleaner that they could see the sea bed even at 20 ft depth. As I have said, the other side of the coin has been substantial increases in water and sewerage bills for South West Water's customers; but the Government and my hon. Friends have looked very carefully at the obligations—particularly the environmental obligations—that South West Water must meet.

The success of this action has meant that the clarifications that we were able to provide for Ofwat greatly helped its task of reviewing the company's price limits and setting new and tight limits last summer. For example, this year's average increase in charges has been limited to 4.1 per cent. The original limit for price increases for the

five-year period 1995-2000 was 5.5 per cent. per year over and above inflation. Following the Government's clarification, Ofwat was able to reduce that to an average of 1.1 per cent. per year in real terms. For the second five-year period, Ofwat has set a zero price limit—by which I mean no increase in prices in real terms.

In addition, the Director General of Ofwat has impressed on the water companies that they must adjust the tariffs, so that meter customers now pay a fairer charge. That means, in the case of South West Water, that its unmeasured charges have risen by 5.3 per cent., but the measured water charges have been cut by 8.1 per cent., and measured sewerage charges by 9.3 per cent.

Furthermore, to assist customers, the company cut its charge for meter installation by 33 per cent. last year. That price reduction will obviously be beneficial to many customers, particularly single householders, those paying a high rateable value basic charge and those whose water consumption is relatively low, making meters a sensible option.

The Liberals—including the hon. Member for Truro this evening—have strongly advocated the use of council tax bands as a basis for charging for water. Of course, what the Liberal Party either fails to understand or chooses conveniently to ignore—the latter, I suspect—is that to move to the council tax banding system would merely produce a different set of gainers and losers.

A change along these lines for a charging system for water would not be any more equitable than any other unmeasured basis. In particular, the introduction would give rise to widespread and arbitrary changes in bills, including the possibility of substantial increases in charges for many of those least able to pay.

**Mr. Matthew Taylor:** It would help with their incomes.

**Sir Paul Beresford:** The hon. Gentleman plainly does not understand. Perhaps he should read *Hansard* tomorrow and see whether he can wrap his mind around the facts. What he suggests would not produce the benefits he seeks.

It is plain that South West Water is successfully implementing a huge capital investment programme that is raising bringing water quality to the necessary level. It is improving environmental standards, underpinning the area's efforts to revive the tourist industry, and attracting new industries.

After a number of years of rapid price increases, much tighter price limits have been set. I congratulate my hon. Friends whom I mentioned earlier on joining the Government in maintaining pressure on South West Water to ensure that it provides its customers with an efficient, high-quality service, but now in particular with the emphasis on keeping costs down.

It would pay the Liberal party to take a leaf out of my hon. Friends' book, and cease its continual attempts to ride every convenient horse at the politically opportune time. At one moment they clamour for improved standards; at the next, they whinge about costs as a result of the improvement of those standards. Action is happening on charges, but not at the expense of improved standards.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Adjourned accordingly at twenty-eight minutes past Ten o'clock.*

# House of Commons

*Friday 5 May 1995*

*The House met at half-past Nine o'clock*

## PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

MADAM SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, till Tuesday 9 May, pursuant to Order [28 April] and Resolution [2 May].*

*Adjourned at twenty-six minutes to Ten o'clock.*

# House of Commons

*Tuesday 9 May 1995*

*The House met at half-past Two o'clock*

## PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

## MADAM SPEAKER'S STATEMENT

**Madam Speaker:** I have to report that the House attended Her Majesty on Friday last in Westminster Hall with an Address, in reply to which Her Majesty was pleased to make a most Gracious Speech. I would cause my words in presenting the Address and Her Majesty's reply to be entered upon the Journals of this House.

## ROYAL ASSENT

**Madam Speaker:** I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified Her Royal Assent to the following Act:

Agricultural Tenancies Act 1995.

# Oral Answers to Questions

## EMPLOYMENT

### Labour Statistics, Warwickshire

1. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are now employed in Warwickshire, or the appropriate travel-to-work areas, excluding Coventry; and how many were self-employed in the same area in 1990-91. [21616]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. James Paice):** The labour force survey estimates there were 239,000 people in employment in the county of Warwickshire in autumn 1994, and 228,000 in spring 1992. I am afraid that the comparable information for 1990-91 is not available.

**Mr. Pawsey:** My hon. Friend's reply shows that the number of jobs in Warwickshire has grown by about 700 in each of the past 18 months. Does my hon. Friend agree that that is a clear sign that the recovery is on track? Does he further agree that any plans to introduce a national minimum wage, as proposed by Opposition Members and the trade unions, would cost us jobs?

**Mr. Paice:** My hon. Friend is entirely right about the recovery, and we are entering another year of sustained growth. He is also right about the minimum wage. Every time the Opposition equivocate on the question of what level the wage should be, every time they evade the issue of differentials and every time they publish another consultation document, they demonstrate that they know the truth, as we do—minimum wages destroy jobs. When will they have the courage either to answer the questions or to admit that they were wrong?

**Mr. Mike O'Brien:** Is the Minister aware that unemployment in Warwickshire has risen from 7,300 in 1979 to 12,130 this month? Does that not show that what destroys jobs in Warwickshire is not a minimum wage, but the Tory Government?

**Mr. Paice:** Unemployment rose under the previous Labour Government, and no Labour Government have left office with unemployment lower than it was when they came into office. Unemployment has risen throughout most of the industrialised world during that period, in which we have been through two serious recessions. We are recovering, and we are leading the world in that recovery.

**Mr. Alan Howarth:** I welcome the encouraging news which my hon. Friend the Minister has been able to report to the House on employment in Warwickshire. If, however, the Government will not allow adequate investment in education in Warwickshire, we must expect that there will be 172 fewer people employed as teachers in the county during the current year. Given the importance of education to the employment prospects of our young people, we must then expect that fewer Warwickshire children will get jobs—whether self-employed or any other kind—in the future. Will my hon. Friend use his powers of persuasion with those in the Treasury to encourage them to look beyond the ends of their noses?

**Mr. Paice:** My hon. Friend knows that expenditure on education is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education. We must study how well money is used. There will always be more claims on the money than can be met by the available money. The job of every responsible authority is to make sure that the money is properly used. We delegated that power to schools so that the people at the coal face can use the money to the best advantage of the school.

### Unemployment Data

2. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received from the Royal Statistical Society on the accuracy of unemployment data; and if he will make a statement. [21617]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Phillip Oppenheim):** I met the Royal Statistical Society working group studying the accuracy of official unemployment statistics and had lengthy discussions with it. We are currently considering its conclusions.

**Mr. Williams:** In that review of unemployment statistics, the Royal Statistical Society concluded that the general public do not trust Government data on such statistics or find them convincing in any way. It suggested that the claimant count should no longer be used as the basis for the monthly figures and proposed instead that the quarterly labour force survey, which has much wider international recognition, should be published monthly. Will the Government seriously consider that recommendation and accept the society's criticisms of their fiddled figures?

**Mr. Oppenheim:** The hon. Gentleman should read the report carefully. Its main conclusion was not that the claimant count should be discontinued. It said that the count should be continued, but that more prominence should be given to the labour force survey, which the TUC called "fully reliable". As the hon. Gentleman and Labour apparently agree and as that count shows unemployment at very similar levels to the claimant count, perhaps Opposition Members should stop making nonsensical claims that there are really 3 million or 4 million unemployed people.

**Mr. Anthony Coombs:** Will my hon. Friend confirm that the labour force survey, which the TUC says is totally reliable, showed that last year the numbers of those in employment rose by 347,000 and that two thirds of those were full-time jobs? Is it not typical of Labour Members that, when there is that sort of good news, they choose to ignore it and to call into question the statistics—through the survey—that others, including the trades unions, regard as entirely reliable?

**Mr. Oppenheim:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The labour force survey shows that employment rose strongly last year and that the vast majority of the jobs created were full and not part time. Labour Members say that they support the labour force survey, which we have promoted all along. We have increased its frequency from once every two years—its frequency under Labour—to four times a year. That survey shows that unemployment is not 3 million or 4 million, as trade union leaders and Labour Members have been claiming for so long, but 2.4 million, which is almost exactly the same level as the claimant count that they say is fiddled.

**Mr. McCartney:** It is astonishing that the Minister can stand there and claim that the Royal Statistical Society report backs the Government's claims for their figures. The report said that the Government's use of the claimant count was "both unfortunate and unhealthy"—

**Madam Speaker:** Order. I think that the hon. Gentleman is aware that Opposition and Back-Bench Members are not allowed to quote directly. Could he paraphrase, please?

**Mr. McCartney:** I will paraphrase it, Madam Speaker. In civil service jargon, it is fiddled. Since 1979, four out of 10 jobs in manufacturing have been lost and nearly 3 million full-time jobs have been lost to the economy, at a cost of £13 billion. If those jobs have been replaced at all, it has been by part-time, semi-skilled or unskilled, poor jobs. When will the manufacturing industry in this country have the feel good factor?

**Mr. Oppenheim:** Perhaps I can educate the hon. Gentleman. In the 1970s, when Labour was in power—that heyday of British manufacturing—British Steel was the world's largest loss maker, British Leyland was the butt of music hall jokes, British Airways was rated below Aeroflot, British manufacturing output fell, our productivity was the lowest in the OECD and our growth in manufacturing productivity was also the lowest. Since then, we have been producing more manufactured goods of higher quality, which is the best guarantee of more high-quality jobs in future.

## Equal Pay

3. **Mr. Austin-Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make it his policy to promote equal pay for women part-time workers. [21618]

**The Minister of State, Department of Employment (Miss Ann Widdecombe):** The Equal Pay Act 1970 already provides for equal pay for equal work, irrespective of the number of hours worked.

**Mr. Austin-Walker:** Is not the reality that Government policy has undermined fair pay for part-time workers, more than 80 per cent. of whom are women? Does the Minister not recognise that the abolition of the wages councils, without creating a single extra job, has increased the pay difference between low-paid men and low-paid women? Would she now agree with the Equal Opportunities Commission that the introduction of a national minimum wage would increase and promote fair and equal pay and go a great way towards improving the financial position of women in employment?

**Miss Widdecombe:** Such topsy-turvy reasoning can have come about only because the hon. Gentleman is dizzy from watching the policy somersaults of his leader. The abolition of the wages councils has increased pay in sectors formerly covered by councils. A minimum wage would cause unemployment, which would almost certainly be disproportionate among women.

The fact that it would cause unemployment has been acknowledged by the Leader and deputy Leader of the Opposition and forms part of an OECD report, yet Opposition Members do nothing except hang on to what amounts to a deceit perpetrated on the electorate. They promise jam tomorrow but will not say at what level the wage will be set, how many jobs will be lost, and in what sectors they will be lost. That is why I talk about topsy-turvy reasoning. I suggest that Opposition Members do some serious thinking about the damage that their policies will do to women.

**Lady Olga Maitland:** Does my hon. Friend agree that women's part-time wages have increased more than men's in the past three years? Does she also agree that women welcome the opportunity to work part time, because it fits in more easily with their family lives?

**Miss Widdecombe:** My hon. Friend is right. It is worth studying what is happening to women's pay as a proportion of men's since 1970.

**Mr. Ashton:** Why 1970?

**Miss Widdecombe:** I shall explain why 1970—and 1975 and 1979. In 1970-74, during which period, Opposition Members may just recall if they have done their studies, we had a Conservative Government, women's pay as compared to men's rose by 9 percentage points. We then had a Labour Government and it rose by a measly 1 percentage point. Since then, we have had a Conservative Government and it has risen by a further 6 per centage points, and is now at its highest level ever. Opposition Members should apologise to women for their shameful record and applaud ours.

**Ms Short:** May I explain to Ministers why the Government are so deeply unpopular and despised by the British people? Are they aware that most of the jobs created in the British economy in the past 10 years have

been low-paid, service sector jobs because of the Government's strategy of encouraging low-paid employment? The effect is that most of the jobs have been taken up by women, and women's work has been undervalued and underpaid with no access to promotions or pensions. Increasingly, men are being squeezed out of employment or forced to take temporary part-time work.

Does the Minister not understand that it is in the interests of the British economy that we change that, introduce a national minimum wage—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] The Government should listen to the people, and they will then know why they are so unpopular. A national minimum wage would improve the status of women in work, stop men being squeezed out of employment and encourage employers to invest instead of compete by wage cutting. People would then feel more confident and the Government would be a little less unpopular.

**Miss Widdecombe:** It ill behoves a party that has not won an election for 21 years to preach about popularity. I am amazed that Labour Members have not learnt the lesson of the past, which is that brief and temporary popularity does not lead to success at general elections. After the next general election, they will all be back in their places, still trying to perpetrate deceits on an electorate whom they will not have deceived.

Since 1979, women's pay, hourly and weekly, full time and part time, has increased faster than that of men. There are 1.5 million more women in work than there were 10 years ago. The greatest increase has been among women with young children, which is a tribute to our child care policies. There has been a huge rise in the number of self-employed women and a trebling of the number of women in law and accountancy. May I suggest to the hon. Lady that she does her homework properly?

**Ms Short:** Too long.

**Miss Widdecombe:** If my answer was long, it was because the hon. Lady's question was not only long but packed full of inaccuracies from start to finish.

### Labour Statistics

4. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are currently in full-time employment; and if he will make a statement. [21619]

**The Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Michael Portillo):** Estimates from the labour force survey for the winter of 1994-95 show that there were 19.2 million people in full-time employment in Great Britain. That is an increase of 243,000 since spring 1993.

**Mr. Dunn:** I am grateful to the Secretary of State for that reply. Will he tell the House how many of those people in full-time employment would remain in full-time employment if a minimum wage were introduced and if the strikers charter of the Labour party were adopted?

**Mr. Portillo:** Of course, if we went back to strikes, that would have a profound impact on job creation and inward investment.

I recently heard the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) promising trade union rights that were not enjoyed under Wilson, Callaghan or Attlee—in other words, not only rolling back all the reforms of Conservative Governments but promising rights to trade unions that have never been enjoyed before. That is the expense of the deal between the Labour party and the trade unions.

As for the number of jobs that a minimum wage would destroy, that depends on the level of the minimum wage, and the Labour party will not tell us the level. That is the most cynical deceit of the British electorate. To come before the people of the country and tell them that they should have a minimum wage but not declare its level is deceitful, and it is hypocrisy. If it were set at the level at which the TUC would like it, it would destroy 750,000 jobs.

**Ms Harman:** Will the Secretary of State recognise and face up to the fact that is evident to British people—that, as permanent full-time jobs are going, all that people can find in their place are temporary and part-time jobs? Will he admit that the figures show that there are 122,000 fewer full-time jobs in our economy than there were two years ago, and 300,000 more part-time jobs? More and more people are being forced into part-time work, not of their choosing but because the full-time, permanent, secure, decently paid jobs they want are not there in a Tory economy.

**Mr. Portillo:** It is most interesting that, on the day that the hon. Lady launched a document on the national minimum wage, she is not prepared to mention the subject in the House of Commons. Having given a press conference in which she refused to announce the level of that minimum wage, she refuses again to tell the House of Commons the level at which she would set the minimum wage.

What the hon. Lady did come here and do was ignore the facts, because in the past year, full-time jobs have increased by 204,000 and part-time jobs have increased by only 92,000. Where do those figures come from? They come from the labour force survey that the Labour party has advocated this afternoon, which the TUC tells us is entirely reliable. Why did the hon. Lady take the opportunity to tell the House of Commons that she is prepared to destroy jobs by setting a minimum wage, and why did she not tell us its level?

**Mrs. Peacock:** Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, in the survey to which he refers, only 14 per cent. of those interviewed said that they would prefer to be in full-time employment rather than the part-time employment that they were undertaking at that moment?

**Mr. Portillo:** My hon. Friend is right. Every Government in Europe want to encourage some part-time employment because, for instance, they want women to be able to combine a job with their family responsibilities. In Britain, thanks to the flexibility that we enjoy, 6 million people are able to combine family responsibilities with part-time work, and, as my hon. Friend said, the vast majority have a part-time job because they want one. The curiosity is that now the Labour party wants to destroy those part-time jobs by introducing the minimum wage. It is the most miserable cynicism, and Labour Members should be ashamed of themselves.

### Allerton Outreach Team

5. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people, to date, have been placed in employment by the Allerton outreach team. [21620]

**Miss Widdecombe:** As the hon. Gentleman knows, Bradford council manages the Allerton outreach team, but I understand that, up to 26 April 1995, 65 people have been placed into employment.

**Mr. Madden:** Why, then, is the Minister's Department so mean and niggardly in its treatment of the Allerton outreach team? Will she acknowledge that, in finding more than 70 jobs—that is the latest figure—the team has saved the state £1 million per year? Will she urgently arrange for her officials to investigate the reasons for the team's success and, more importantly, ensure that two full-time posts are funded properly by her Department, so that my constituents who are desperately looking for work may be assisted by the team which has been so successful in finding jobs in the past few weeks?

**Miss Widdecombe:** Notwithstanding the rather provocative language that the hon. Gentleman used at the beginning of his question, he has raised an important constituency point. I congratulate the Allerton outreach team on its performance. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that the Employment Department funded the team on a pilot basis. As we have completed that pilot funding, the training and enterprise council has now agreed that it will contribute £10,000 towards the salary of the full-time official and £10,000 to meet the cost of vouchers for training. The Employment Department will continue to assist with vacancies and other services of that type.

The hon. Gentleman will be aware that we originally funded the team through the programme development fund but, as that has now gone into the single regeneration budget, the Employment Department no longer has any responsibility for it. However, Bradford council can bid against those funds, so I suggest that the hon. Gentleman should address his question to the council.

**Mr. Barron:** Does the Minister not recognise that withdrawing funding from the scheme has created chaos similar to that which the Government have created elsewhere in the labour market? The lack of job opportunities in Bradford and insecurity at work nationally are only a part of the Government's failure. In the Yorkshire and Humberside region, 55 per cent. of male temporary workers and 40 per cent. of female temporary workers want, but cannot find, permanent work. What will the Minister say to the more than 61,000 people, and their families, for whom the Government's policies mean lost opportunities, lack of work and insecurity?

**Miss Widdecombe** *rose—*

**Mr. Lewis:** Make it quick, your broomstick is being clamped.

**Miss Widdecombe:** Well, before my broomstick is clamped, I suggest that the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) should study a few figures. Why does he not tell the people of Bradford that unemployment has declined from 9.9 per cent. this time last year to 8.7 per cent currently? Why does he not point out to the people of Bradford the Government's jobfinder's grant pilot and the grants that are available under that scheme, our workwise and 1-2-1 assistance and our work trials assistance? Why does he not try to bring hope to the people of Bradford and to the people of Yorkshire and Humberside instead of always trying to depress them? I have said it before and I will say it again: one can tell how well the economy is doing from the length of Opposition Members' faces.

## Labour Statistics

6. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will reconsider the Government's method of assessing employment statistics. [21621]

**Mr. Oppenheim:** The Employment Department has two measures of unemployment: the claimant count and the International Labour Organisation standard labour force survey. We always recommend that people should look at both sets of figures to get a good idea of what is happening in the labour market. The LFS of unemployment stands at 2.4 million.

**Mr. Janner:** Does the Minister agree that the number of people whom the statistics show to be unemployed depends entirely on the Government's current definition of the word "unemployment"? As the words "claimant count" inevitably exclude no fewer than 10 categories of people who should be included, the Government's definition is very unlikely to be grossly exaggerated.

**Mr. Oppenheim:** With all due respect to the hon. and learned Gentleman, he should know that we have no direct control over the standard for the labour force survey. That standard is set by the International Labour Organisation, and we do not deviate from it. If he does not like the claimant count, by all means let him concentrate on the labour force survey, which shows unemployment standing at 2.4 million. The TUC supports that survey and so, apparently, does the Labour party. Why then do Labour Members persist in claiming that unemployment is really 3 million or 4 million, when the international standard labour force survey clearly says that it is 2.4 million?

**Mr. Simon Coombs:** I recognise that the international labour force survey has some drawbacks, but does my hon. Friend at least accept the fact that according, to that survey, the United Kingdom has the highest level of employment in the European Union? In that context, does he agree that there is a need for extreme caution in the dealings that he and his colleagues have with their European counterparts, so that they do nothing to discourage other countries in the Union from continuing with their disastrous policy of the national minimum wage?

**Mr. Oppenheim:** My hon. Friend is right. The international standard figures clearly show that Britain has lower unemployment and higher employment than the other European Union countries that have a national minimum wage set at a reasonably significant level. The Opposition should consider that fact carefully before pretending to the less well-off that there is some simple cost-free way of increasing their pay, especially as the Labour party does not even have the guts to tell them what the level of the minimum wage will be, so that they would know what it would cost in lost jobs.

**Ms Eagle:** Will the Government now take on board the recommendations of the Royal Statistical Society report and make the labour force survey monthly? The Government could carry on collecting the claimant count figures but replace the definition of unemployment—the claimant count, which simply counts the number of people

on benefit, rather than the number who are unemployed—with the definition in the labour force survey. Will the Government now do that?

**Mr. Oppenheim:** We certainly do not disagree with the suggestion of the RSS that the labour force survey should command more attention. If the Opposition prefer to quote the LFS figure rather than the claimant count, they will. However, if they do, I must warn them that they will find that the LFS showed that unemployment in 1979 stood not at 1 million but at 1.5 million and that, as I have said before, it now shows the unemployment figure as 2.4 million. The problem with upgrading the survey from quarterly to monthly is that that would cost £10 million. If the Opposition are prepared to commit a future Labour Government to spending £10 million on upgrading the LFS to a monthly figure, let them give a policy pledge here. If they are not prepared to make such a pledge, they should stop complaining that we are not prepared to do so.

### Workfare

7. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what new studies he is conducting into workfare; and if he will make a statement. [21622]

**Mr. Portillo:** None at present. The essence of any system of benefit for unemployed people must be that the recipients are actively seeking work and are willing to undertake work when it is made available, but I do not believe that the state should be the employer of last resort.

**Mr. Greenway:** What does my right hon. Friend make of rumours that the Labour party is planning to set a minimum wage of £180 a week? [Hon. Members: "Oh!"] Whatever they say, those are the rumours. Does my right hon. Friend recall that Beveridge said that people should be on benefit for six months, and that that should be followed by work or training for work with a view to long-term employment, as the real means of saving the lives of people in the right sort of way?

**Mr. Portillo:** On my hon. Friend's first point, I congratulate him on being the only person who has any idea of the level at which the Labour party would set the minimum wage, because the Labour party simply will not tell us. On his second point, of course it has been understood since the time of Beveridge that people must be willing to demonstrate their availability for work. Ultimately, that must mean that one can test that availability by providing something for unemployed people to do and expecting them to do it. I do not want to quibble about language and say whether that is workfare or not. It is not what I would call workfare, but it seems a perfectly reasonable proposition.

**Mr. Eastham:** Let me assure the Secretary of State that 2.5 million people in the United Kingdom desperately need a job. As for workfare, three weeks ago members of the Select Committee on Employment were in America, and we found that, because of the Reagan Government's policies, workfare did not exist there. One of the problems that has been acknowledged is the fact that the mothers of one-parent families need training and, more than anything else, some child care. Is that not a fact that the Government have never faced?

**Mr. Portillo:** I am not responsible for policies in the United States; I am responsible for policies in this country. I am proud of the service that the Employment Service provides to claimants, helping them to stay in touch with the labour market and become more employable and providing them with opportunities to improve their training and make themselves attractive to employers after long periods of unemployment. Those are the policies that we follow, and we have been opposed in those policies day after day and week after week by the Labour party.

**Sir Ralph Howell:** In view of the acknowledged success of the workstart pilot schemes devised by Professor Snower, will my right hon. Friend institute a workfare scheme, which is also supported by Professor Snower and myself?

**Mr. Portillo:** We are continuing with the workstart scheme. From April this year there will be 5,000 places at a cost of £30 million. The principle of the workstart scheme is that we provide a subsidy to firms to take on people who have been unemployed for a long time. My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has announced that from April 1996 there will be a rebate of national insurance contributions for one year for employers who take on the long-term unemployed. That is another means by which we provide a subsidy to employers to take on people who have been without work for a long time.

### Long-term Unemployment

8. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what new measures he proposes to tackle long-term unemployment. [21623]

**Mr. Paice:** In April, we introduced four new measures to help long-term unemployed people and we extended three others. More than 240,000 places will be available on those programmes in this year alone.

**Mr. Jones:** A strategy is needed to get thousands of unemployed aerospace workers back into their industry. What will the Government do to help the workers at Raytheon Jets, who have been told that the production of jet aircraft is to be transferred to the United States? What help will they give the workers at Raytheon Jets, at least in saving some of the jobs that are scheduled to go to the United States? It is a loyal, productive and highly skilled work force that deserves the Government's help.

**Mr. Paice:** The hon. Gentleman knows that the details of employment policies, and particularly training policies, in Wales are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend Secretary of State for Wales, as I presume the factory is located there. Obviously, it is a matter for grave regret when any company decides to relocate outside Britain. Fortunately, far more companies want to relocate to Britain rather than take their jobs abroad.

**Mr. Sykes:** When the Minister writes to Mr. Chirac to congratulate him on consigning French socialism to the dustbin of history, what measures will he suggest to the French President? Which regulations will he recommend that the French get rid of first? Will it be the job-shedding social chapter, the 48-hour week, the minimum wage or the ridiculous works councils? Will my hon. Friend tell us which one?

**Mr. Paice:** The French people have already demonstrated their good judgment in electing President

Chirac. I am quite sure that he will follow that by recognising the veracity of our position, which is that the social chapter is designed totally to destroy jobs.

**Mr. Chidgey:** Does the Secretary of State recall that in 1993-94 one in seven training and enterprise councils showed a decline in job prospects for scheme leavers and some 48 per cent. of all training scheme leavers were unemployed after six months? Does he expect that the figures for 1994-95, which I trust will be available soon, will tell a similar story of failure, and if so, will he give the House a commitment to amend policy urgently, in order properly to readdress the unacceptable level of long-term unemployment in Britain?

**Mr. Paice:** The hon. Gentleman, who has attended Employment questions for a long time, knows full well that we have already made significant changes to our policy on training for work precisely because we were not happy with its outcome. We were not happy with the number of people getting into jobs. That is why we have refocused it and concentrated help and funding on TECs precisely so that people will get jobs out of them. We expect a significant and sustained improvement in the outcome of training for work.

### Unemployment

9. **Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the latest unemployment figure; and if he will make a statement. [21624]

**Mr. Portillo:** Seasonally adjusted claimant unemployment in the United Kingdom was 2,346,200 in March 1995—a fall of 632,300 since December 1992.

**Sir Thomas Arnold:** While I welcome those figures, does my right hon. Friend acknowledge that the supply side changes of recent years mean that there is still plenty of spare capacity in the economy without taking undue risks with inflation?

**Mr. Portillo:** Yes. I believe that, by investing in education, as we do in Britain, by encouraging employers to see the benefit of training and by investing large sums of taxpayers' money in training we can improve the quality of the work force, so that a larger number of our people can participate in work, without taking risks with inflation.

**Ms Harman:** Instead of boasting that the problem of unemployment in Britain has been solved, why does not the Secretary of State recognise that it still remains a major problem? Does he admit that, in the past five years, 11 million people have been out of work and, as a result, have had to claim benefits; that long-term unemployment remains a problem, still hovering around the 1 million mark; and that of all the G7 countries, we are the only one to have seen no employment growth since 1979?

Does he recognise that unemployment is a problem not just for the unemployed but for those in work who fear that their jobs too might be the next to go and know that, if they lose their jobs, the Government will kick them in the teeth with cuts in training and benefit? While the right hon. Gentleman will not tell the truth about the true size of unemployment in Britain, it is no wonder people do not trust the Tories.

**Mr. Portillo:** I make no complacent claims about unemployment in Britain. I believe that it is too high. But I also believe that it is lower than the European Community average because of the policies that we in Britain follow; that a higher proportion of our people are in work than in any major country in the EC because of the policies that we follow here; that a higher percentage of our women are in work than in any major European country because of the policies that we follow here; that we have seen a faster fall in unemployment than any major EC country because of the policies that we follow here; and that, in particular, the countries where the levels of unemployment are highest and where the levels of unemployment among young people are highest are those countries in the EC that have adopted and applied the minimum wage—the policy that the Labour party wishes to impose upon Britain which would have the same result of destroying jobs, in particular for our young people.

**Mr. Jenkin:** Is it not clear that, had the voters last week been considering our record on unemployment and our overall record on the economy, the result would have been very different, but, since their confidence in our management of the economy has been so rudely shaken as a result of the collapse of the exchange rate mechanism, had we not better start pointing out that we made a mistake over that policy and that we have learnt our lessons, whereas the Opposition, with their unthinking commitment to the single European currency, would repeat exactly the same mistakes all over again?

**Mr. Portillo:** We have no plans to go back into the exchange rate mechanism, but I believe that the Labour party does. But had the British people known that the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) had admitted that the minimum wage that his party advocates would lead to a shake-out in jobs, the result of last week's elections might have been very different indeed.

### Sex Equality Branch

10. **Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the priorities for the sex equality branch of his Department. [21625]

**Miss Widdecombe:** The sex equality branch is continuing to work successfully in furthering the Employment Department's objective to counter sex discrimination in the labour market and to promote women's interests in the workplace and beyond.

**Mr. Bayley:** Why does the Department's sex equality branch not have a written statement of objectives? Why has not it produced a single leaflet to tell women in Britain what the sex equality branch has been doing for them? Are the Government so embarrassed about how little they are doing for women that they have made the sex equality branch the best-kept secret in Whitehall?

**Miss Widdecombe:** The hon. Gentleman has obviously never heard of Opportunity 2000; he has never heard of New Horizons; he has never heard of Fair Play for Women; and he has never heard of a large number of initiatives, backed with conferences, road shows, leaflets and general information. May I suggest that the hon. Member does a bit of homework before he asks such silly questions?

**Mr. Garnier:** Is my hon. Friend aware that, when she visited the Harborough constituency not so long ago,

women's unemployment was lower than it has been for the past 10 years? Does not that give the lie to the Opposition's policies of demanding positive discrimination? What people want are jobs, not special jobs.

**Miss Widdecombe:** My hon. and learned Friend is absolutely right. Our policies have produced a high percentage of women in work compared with the rest of Europe, a higher level of female participation compared with most of the rest of Europe, a lower level of female unemployment compared with most of the rest of Europe. We have done that through our flexible policies, and all that the Opposition have to offer is words, words, words; loss of jobs, loss of jobs, loss of jobs and a far worse world for women. Women in this country do not want to vote for that lot over there.

## PRIME MINISTER

### Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Jon Owen Jones:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 9 May. [21646]

**The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton):** I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is currently in Moscow on an official visit as part of the VE day commemorations.

**Mr. Jones:** Does the Leader of the House have any sympathy for a perplexed and lonely young man, Mr. John Richards, the last remaining Tory councillor in Cardiff, who only eight years ago was part of a ruling group with more than 30 colleagues? While Mr. Richards looks around and tries to find out what has happened to his colleagues, how does the Leader of the House explain that calamity? Does he think that—*[Interruption.]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Jones:** Does he think that on Thursday, the electorate showed that they have the same opinion of the Government as Will Carling has of the Rugby Football Union?

**Mr. Newton:** My sympathy is with the people of Cardiff for what is about to be inflicted on them.

**Mr. Hunter:** Bearing in mind the commemorative theme of the past few days, and in anticipation of the Government's meeting tomorrow with Sinn Fein, will my right hon. Friend reassert that the Government will not bow to the IRA, will never surrender to IRA tyranny and will never seek appeasement with the evil of the IRA, but will remain resolute and resist all that Sinn Fein-IRA has stood for over the years?

**Mr. Newton:** I can certainly give my hon. Friend the assurance he seeks. As he will know, it has repeatedly been made clear that we were not prepared to agree to Ministers joining the exploratory talks with Sinn Fein until it accepted that position and the need for a serious dialogue about decommissioning.

**Mr. Prescott:** Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that Thursday's local elections were a disaster for the Tories and a triumph for Labour? Does he agree with his right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson), that the Government should stop lecturing and start listening to the British people, beginning tomorrow with the London hospital debate?

**Mr. Newton:** The best thing that I can say to the right hon. Gentleman is that I have been studying with interest a report in *The Guardian* of 6 May under the heading,

"Record haul of seats for reborn left",

which is followed by a quotation by the then Leader of the Opposition claiming that it shows the result of the next general election. That was in 1990.

**Mr. Prescott:** The House will note that the right hon. Gentleman avoided the question on the London hospitals. Is not the simple truth that, 50 years ago, the Tories voted against the creation of Labour's national health service and that, in the past five years, they have closed more than 300 hospitals and will vote tomorrow to close some more? Is not that why one can never trust the Tories when they say that the national health service is safe in their hands?

**Mr. Newton:** My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health will set out very clearly in tomorrow's debate a policy, the purpose of which is to create a modern pattern of hospital and primary care provision in London. That is what it will do. As to capital schemes, I remind the right hon. Gentleman that, since 1980, more than 800 schemes, each worth £1 million or more, have been completed. That is roughly one a week. At present, there are more than 300 such schemes at the planning, design or construction stage, and that is the biggest sustained hospital and health service development programme in our history.

Q2. **Mr. Congdon:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 9 May. [21647]

**Mr. Newton:** I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Congdon:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that the imposition of a national minimum wage would destroy jobs? Is it not an act of political cowardice to talk about bringing in a minimum wage while not having the courage to specify its level?

**Mr. Newton:** I very much agree with my hon. Friend. I think that it was the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) who acknowledged that a minimum wage would destroy jobs. Although that has been acknowledged, no figure has been given. All we know is that jobs would be destroyed, and it is time that the Opposition told us how many.

**Sir David Steel:** The Leader of the House is a regular tourist in Scotland. Therefore, will he welcome as much as we do this morning's decision by the Court of Session in Edinburgh that British Rail cannot axe its services at the end of May without going through the full consultation procedure? Will he make sure that Government money is there to maintain those services?

**Mr. Newton:** The right hon. Gentleman rather exaggerates my activities as a tourist in Scotland, although

I recall meeting him at a fete in his constituency a couple of years ago. I understand that an application for judicial review has been heard and that the court has ruled that British Rail may not withdraw the service until the statutory closure procedure has been completed. It is for the British Railways Board and ScotRail to consider what action to take in the light of the full written judgment, and it would not be right for me to comment further at this stage.

Q3. **Mrs. Peacock:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 9 May. [21648]

**Mr. Newton:** I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

**Mrs. Peacock:** Will my right hon. Friend join me in sending thanks to Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother for her role 50 years ago in supporting King George during the dark and difficult days of the war? Will he also join me in warmly thanking her for her tremendous support and activity during the VE celebrations over the weekend?

**Mr. Newton:** My hon. Friend speaks for the whole House. Over the weekend there has been an outstandingly-successful series of events of remembrance, reconciliation and hope for the future. They reminded us of the contribution that was made by our service men and service women and many civilians to the effort of 50 years ago. As my hon. Friend says, it has reminded us not least of the contribution that was made by the late King and Her Majesty the Queen Mother during the war and by Her Majesty the Queen over so many years since then.

Q4. **Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 9 May. [21649]

**Mr. Newton:** I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Wilson:** Since the threat to overnight rail services between Scotland and England arises directly from Government policies, many of us think that it is precisely for the Leader of the House to answer in respect of what happened in the Court of Session this morning. What does it tell us about this Government that the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Secretary of State for Transport were both prepared to conspire in a deceit that has been found to be illegal as well as immoral?

Will the Leader of the House give an undertaking that the letter and the spirit of today's judgment will be respected by the Government? Does he accept that this excellent decision will give fresh heart to campaigners throughout the country, who see similar threats to their vulnerable services in what the Government are doing to the railway industry?

**Mr. Newton:** As I have already said, it is now obviously right for the terms of the judgment to be properly and carefully considered, but I also remind the hon. Gentleman that the decision to withdraw this service was a commercial matter for British Rail, and that representations, of a kind to which he will no doubt wish to contribute, about all sleeper services can be made when the Franchising Director consults on the passenger service requirement later this month.

**Mr. Streeter:** Will my hon. Friend join me in congratulating the French people, who on Sunday rejected socialism and elected a right-wing President? Does not that show—*[Interruption.]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order. The hon. Gentleman must be heard.

**Mr. Streeter:** On Sunday, the French people rejected socialism and elected a right-wing President. Does not that show that all over Europe people recognise that, while left-wing politicians offer sound bites, Conservative policies work?

**Mr. Newton:** I certainly wish to welcome the election of the new President, and I think everyone would wish to send him this country's good wishes in his new job. My hon. Friend is right to say that one of the factors in that election will have been the extent to which socialist policies are coming under criticism throughout Europe. Indeed, the French Employers' Federation has said:

"the excessive level and poor structure of taxes on business add to production costs, slowing down investment and job creation."

It is exactly the policies that have now been rejected in France that right hon. and hon. Labour Members would now want to impose on Britain.

Q5. **Mr. Jamieson:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 9 May. [21650]

**Mr. Newton:** I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Jamieson:** Is the Leader of the House aware that, following last Thursday's meltdown of Tory support in the south-west, particularly in the constituency of the hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Streeter), 55 out of 60 councillors on Plymouth city council are Labour members, and the only bodies that the Conservatives control in the region are the quangos? Is not the message from last Thursday's elections that there is now an unbridgeable gap between the electorate and the Government? The only way in which that can be bridged is by having a general election.

**Mr. Newton:** Earlier, I extended my sympathy to the people of Cardiff; I will now extend my sympathy to the people of Plymouth.

### Ministerial Visits

Q6. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will pay an official visit to Swindon. [21651]

**Mr. Newton:** I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend has no current plans to do so.

**Mr. Coombs:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that companies in Swindon and elsewhere would rather stick with a Government who have firmly rejected the concept of a national minimum wage than run the risk of supporting a party that might introduce a national minimum wage at a level so low that it would be meaningless, or at a level that would imperil employment and run the risk of reducing companies' investment in training?

**Mr. Newton:** I agree with my hon. Friend that the people of Swindon and, no doubt, the people of every

town in the country would not wish to go down a path that will undermine employment, heap new costs on business, undermine the economic recovery, undermine our capacity to attract overseas investment, and undermine our ability to defend Britain's interests in Europe.

**Mr. Pike:** As the Leader of the House's job includes presentation of Government policy to the people of Swindon—*[Interruption.]* Ah, I know, Madam Speaker—

**Madam Speaker:** Order. The hon. Member for Swindon (Mr. Coombs) widened the question, but I do not want questioning to go too wide.

**Mr. Pike:** As it is the right hon. Gentleman's job to present Government policy, does he accept that either his presentation has failed or the policy has failed? Will he tell the people of Swindon what change of policy he now proposes—or does he intend to go?

**Mr. Newton:** I would tell the people of Swindon—and, indeed, those represented by the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike)—that, when unemployment is falling by 1,000 a day, when we are enjoying the most sustained period of low inflation for more than 30 years, when export volumes have risen by 12.5 per cent. in a year and when for two successive years ours has been the fastest-growing major European Union economy, one thing is certain: the policies are succeeding.

## Engagements

Q7. **Mr. Waterson:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 9 May. [21652]

**Mr. Newton:** I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Waterson:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that the VE day commemorations throughout the country at the weekend were extremely moving? Does he also agree that we have had 50 years of peace in Europe because this country has maintained strong defences, and has refused to listen to the voices of Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament members and sympathisers in the Labour party?

**Mr. Newton:** I agree with my hon. Friend on both counts. As I said earlier, the celebrations themselves were an outstanding and impressive success; and there is no doubt that the fact that we were able to have them rests on the firmness of this country's defence policy over the years—a policy that has frequently not been supported by the Labour party.

## Nuclear Review

3.30 pm

**The President of the Board of Trade and Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Michael Heseltine):** With permission I would like to make a statement about the conclusions of the Government's nuclear review. It will be followed in due course by a debate. The findings of the review are set out more fully in a White Paper which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and I are publishing today, and placing in the Libraries of both Houses and the Vote Office.

First, let me say that safety has been a paramount consideration throughout the review. The review has also confirmed that nuclear power plays an important role in meeting the United Kingdom's energy needs and should continue to do so, provided that it is competitive and is able to maintain rigorous standards of safety and environmental protection.

The nuclear industry argued the case for additional nuclear power stations. The appropriate test of that case is the potential availability of private sector finance for a project to build a new nuclear power station. There is, at present, no case for Government intervention to distort the electricity market by providing finance or guarantees for one form of generation over another. While the market will ultimately be the judge, the review concluded that on the basis of the figures provided by the industry in the review and in the light of the returns available from alternative generation projects, private finance is unlikely to be available at present for new nuclear construction.

The review also examined whether, and over what timescale, privatisation of the nuclear generators would be feasible. The benefit to consumers from the privatisation of most of the electricity supply industry has been clear: domestic electricity prices are now lower in real terms, even after VAT, than two years ago, with further reductions in the pipeline. The average price paid by industrial consumers has fallen by more than 10 per cent. in real terms since 1989, the last year in which the industry was in state ownership. The nuclear stations had to be excluded from electricity privatisation then, because investors were concerned about the risks of substantially increased nuclear costs; about the performance of the advanced gas-cooled reactor, or AGR, stations; and about the costs of financing new pressurised water reactors—PWRs. The situation today is very different. The generators have removed many uncertainties about the costs of managing spent fuel and waste and decommissioning plant. They have completed the first stage of decommissioning Berkeley Magnox station and the costs have been about one third lower than originally estimated. The performance of the AGRs has vastly improved, and Sizewell B was built within budget and is now in operation.

As a result, the Government have decided to privatise the more modern nuclear stations—the seven AGR stations and the PWR station at Sizewell—during the course of 1996. The liabilities associated with those stations will also be transferred to the private sector. The Government have decided to create a holding company, with the parts of Nuclear Electric and Scottish Nuclear that are to be privatised as its wholly owned subsidiaries. The holding company approach has been designed to preserve the identities of Scottish Nuclear and Nuclear Electric and to establish a significant holding company to be registered in Scotland, where its headquarters will be located. The headquarters will include all key group functions. A chairman independent of both Nuclear Electric and Scottish Nuclear will be appointed.

Scottish Nuclear will continue as a separate entity with its own board. Its continued existence will be protected by special shares in the holding company and SNL. The functions currently performed by Scottish Nuclear at its headquarters in East Kilbride will continued to be undertaken there. In addition, it is expected that engineering functions within the group will be reorganised to bring more jobs to Scotland. In all, those developments are expected to bring at least 100 jobs to Scotland.

The new subsidiary companies will continue to participate in their respective markets in England, Wales and Scotland. There will be no change in the market share held by Scottish Nuclear in Scotland, but the establishment of the new separate Magnox company in England and Wales will mean that Nuclear Electric's private sector successor will have a smaller market share than Nuclear Electric has at present.

In private ownership, the holding company will be free to compete, both domestically and overseas, and privatisation will provide powerful incentives for the two subsidiary companies to benefit their customers by raising efficiency and reducing costs. The new company will be totally committed to maintaining the exemplary safety record of the nuclear power generating industry. Safety is of paramount importance and will not be compromised. As the Health and Safety Commission said about the transition to the private sector in its evidence to the review,

"the system of nuclear regulation in the UK . . . is internationally recognised as a rigorous system for ensuring a high level of safety. It is essentially sound, and there is no reason to change it in any fundamental way to deal with whatever structure emerges."

I agree. The Government's commitment to the continuation of a rigorous safety regime remains absolute.

The Government intend to safeguard financing of long-term liabilities to be passed to the private sector as a result of the proposals through the creation of segregated funds or similar arrangements. The review also considered the future of the Magnox stations. The Government do not believe that the Magnox stations can be privatised. The review did identify, however, opportunities for reducing the costs of discharging their liabilities, which potentially fall to the taxpayer.

The Government propose in the first instance that all Magnox stations and their liabilities should be held in a stand-alone company owned by the Government. That will create a new baseload nuclear generator with 8 per cent. of the English and Welsh market. In due course, that company will be transferred to BNFL, giving BNFL a clear incentive to maximise revenues from Magnox generation, minimise reprocessing and other back-end costs, and optimise the stations' economic life.

Finally, the review examined the fossil fuel levy in England and Wales and the nuclear energy agreement in Scotland. Both Nuclear Electric and Scottish Nuclear have achieved significant improvements in their financial performance and in defining and reducing their liabilities. In the case of Nuclear Electric, the company and its public and private sector successors should now be able to meet the full costs of liabilities as they fall due, without further help from the fossil fuel levy.

The Government have therefore decided that at the time of privatisation, that part of the fossil fuel levy to which Nuclear Electric is entitled should be abolished, at least 18 months earlier than previously expected. Electricity prices in England and Wales will fall by up to 8 per cent. in a full year as a result of that decision, with the average annual household electricity bill falling by as much as £20. Lower prices will also give a major boost to the competitiveness of British industry.

Comparable arrangements will be put in hand in Scotland. The nuclear premium there will be ended and these savings will be passed through to franchise customers in Scotland. Due to these and other savings already in train, domestic electricity prices in Scotland will fall by around 8 per cent. in real terms between 1994 and 1996.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is making an announcement today about issues relevant to the nuclear review which have been examined in his parallel review of radioactive waste management policy.

The proposals I have announced today will make for a more competitive nuclear generation sector operating to continuing, rigorous safety standards. They will strengthen the ability of British companies to market nuclear services abroad. It is the right way forward for this key industry. At the same time, the changes in the fossil fuel levy and the equivalent step in Scotland will bring significant benefits to consumers. I commend these proposals to the House.

**Dr. John Cunningham** (Copeland): The President of the Board of Trade's statement could be succinctly summed up as the private sector gets a cut-price bargain; the taxpayer gets the bill.

Does not the statement by the President of the Board of Trade make it clear that the short-term political objectives of the discredited Cabinet lie behind the Government's decision to privatise the nuclear industry and not the interests of taxpayers and consumers, let alone the employees of the industries themselves? The statement has nothing to do with long-term energy policy or how best to introduce competition but seeks to maximise revenue to the Treasury before the next general election.

How does the President of the Board of Trade make sense of creating a nuclear generator bigger than National Power and PowerGen, when, at the same time, the industry regulator is insisting that those companies divest themselves of generating capacity? How does that fit in with his competition policy in the electricity generating industry?

Should not the decision that the right hon. Gentleman has announced today have been included in the prospectus for the recent sale of shares of PowerGen and National Power? Is it not clear, once again, that investors were misled by the Government's issue of a false prospectus in respect of that sale?

Will the President of the Board of Trade explain how the public interest will be safeguarded under private ownership of civil nuclear power? How will he guarantee that short-term profit demands, for example, will not undermine the long-term interests of public safety and the environment? That is a question that he barely addressed in his statement.

What assurances will the right hon. Gentleman give that there will be an effective and long-lasting financial arrangement to cover all aspects of the eventual decommissioning of and waste management from a privately owned nuclear power company?

Will the President of the Board of Trade assure the House that, although I agree with what he and the nuclear installations inspector said about the safety regime, the full licensing process will be followed by the nuclear installations inspectorate in respect of any new owners? Will the right hon. Gentleman assure us that there will be no short-cutting of the licensing process? Will he assure the House that the full powers of Her Majesty's inspectors of pollution will be maintained and that they will hold full public consultations on the duties and responsibilities of any new private owners?

What requirements will be placed upon a privatised nuclear industry to continue to fund research and development, not only into the industry itself but into the health and safety of people and communities associated with it, as well as into the environmental impact of nuclear power?

Is it not clear from the rout of Tories in local election results in Scotland from Hunterston to Torness, and in England from Heysham to Hartlepool and from Copeland to Suffolk, Coastal—the constituency of the Secretary of State for the Environment—that nuclear industry communities have no confidence in Tory party policies, whether on this industry or on any other aspect of Government policy? The nuclear industry communities in particular decisively rejected Tory candidates the length and breadth of the country.

The President of the Board of Trade referred to consumer interest. Is not it clear from recent reports from consumer watchdogs, including the report from the Electricity Consumers Committee a few days ago, that they share our view that, far from consumers getting a good deal, they have been massively overcharged for their electricity since the privatisation of the industry?

The President's announcement of the ending of the nuclear levy a little more than a year before it was due to end anyway raised a pretty feeble cheer from his Back Benchers. Is not it clear that even that welcome but tiny benefit to which consumers will no doubt give a warm welcome will be far outweighed by the costs of decommissioning and waste management which will be left to the taxpayer for decades to come?

What assurances can the President give the House and electricity consumers about actions to end the abuse of salary awards and share options in a privatised nuclear industry? Will we see a rerun of what has happened with gas, water and electricity where people have made themselves rich at the consumers' expense with no discernible improvement in efficiency or performance, or will the President take some belated action to prevent that from happening?

How can the Government present this sale, which will perhaps raise £3 billion, as a gain to the taxpayer? The taxpayer paid £3 billion to build Sizewell B. At the very best it is a draw for the taxpayer. The purchaser gets not only Sizewell B but seven other AGR stations at the knockdown price of what the taxpayer paid for Sizewell B. As the President was forced to admit, the taxpayer will be left with the bill for the decommissioning of the Magnox stations and for the management of the waste that subsequently accrues.

*[Dr. John Cunningham]*

May I press the right hon. Gentleman on what he had to say about the proposed headquarters in Edinburgh? What is to be the nature of the special share arrangement? How will it guarantee anything from a private company? Will not the likelihood—indeed the certainty—that this company will maintain a London office undermine any pretence that somehow it will be managed from Edinburgh? Is not that the reality and experience of people in Scotland in respect of Britoil and Guinness, to give just two recent examples?

The President said that the White Paper would be the subject of debate. Will he assure the House that before the proposals are acted upon they will be the subject of not only a debate but a vote so that the House has an opportunity to vote upon them? Is it not clear that people will see through this transparent device? The Tories will never be trusted on tax again. The President can be assured of that given the 20 new taxes and the increase of hundreds of pounds in tax bills in the past two years. Will not the people conclude that the result of the statement is simply that the cost of this squalid Government's failures will end up once again on the taxpayers' doormat?

**Mr. Heseltine:** The right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) is one of the few Opposition Members with some understanding of nuclear policy, and that is why he is separated from the vast majority of his party when it comes to expressing ideas on the matter. One thing which is clear—the right hon. Gentleman must recognise it—is that there are no agreed Labour policies on nuclear energy of any sort, shape or size, because the party cannot agree on what to do.

It seemed extraordinary that our announcement that we are to reduce electricity prices by some 8 per cent. next year was apparently seen as an undesirable step by the Labour party. The right hon. Gentleman had an extraordinary range of questions to put to me. One that I found particularly interesting was his question about why the cost of the AGRs and the PWR were not recouped by the sale of the PWR within the grouping. That question should not have been put to me, but to the Labour Government who prepared the stations for authorisation in the original case. It was not a Tory Government who took those decisions, but a Labour Government. I am sad that the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) is not here, because he took one of the last of those decisions, which my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) confirmed when we were first elected.

I would like to mention the Scottish position. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland, as one would expect from a distinguished Secretary of State, has persuasively argued for and achieved a range of safeguards—not that I needed persuading. He has made sure that any successor to my right hon. Friend will be armed with the necessary weaponry as a result of the conditions imposed by the special share arrangements and by the memorandum and articles of the companies.

The headquarters of the company will be in Scotland. That has been enshrined for 10 years as a minimum, and it will remain there after that without repeal unless somebody does something about it. Built into the proposals is a cast-iron undertaking to the Scottish people about the intentions of the Government. If the Labour party has any doubts about that, it must decide what it would want to do if it were ever elected. We have made clear what we intend to do, and the Scottish people can be sure of that.

The right hon. Member for Copeland asked me about the regulator, but he will understand that the regulator is independent and I cannot tell him what to say about the matter. It is entirely for him to comment as he thinks fit. I was asked specifically about the recent flotation of shares in National Power and PowerGen. I can assure the right hon. Gentleman—I am surprised that he has not taken the trouble to find this out—that reference was made to the nuclear review in the prospectus for the sale of the shares.

I found the response of the right hon. Gentleman—who, because of his constituency interests, should know better—particularly distasteful in respect of his reference to nuclear safety, which is in no way a matter of controversy between all the parties in the House. Our standards are excellent, and they have been widely admired and followed through from Government to Government.

The standards are the responsibility of the Health and Safety Executive which, as the House will know, is a tripartite body on which the trade unions are represented. It is therefore of particular relevance that, in its evidence to the nuclear review, the Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate should have given clear indications that it did not believe that a different regime was appropriate whether the industry was in the public or the private sector. I can tell the right hon. Gentleman that the procedures will not be changed unless at the behest of the nuclear inspectorate.

There is nothing new in the idea that the nuclear inspectorate should license private sector sites. I would be happy to produce the information for the House—I am sure that I will be asked to do so. I have a list of about 56 public and private sector sites that are licensed by the nuclear inspectorate. It is a matter of historic fact that some of those sites were licensed by a Labour Government, long before we thought of privatising the industry. Those sites are and were in the private sector.

The fact is that any attempt to frighten the public with the scare tactics characteristic of the Opposition will fall on deaf ears, because the regimes are tested in time and have been applied by all Governments to both public and private sector installations. I have not the slightest doubt that the right hon. Gentleman has done the best that he can with an impossibly weak case.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Madam Speaker:** Order. Those first exchanges have taken about 25 minutes. If that goes on, very few people will be called, so I am asking for brisk questions and answers.

**Sir Mark Lennox-Boyd** (Morecambe and Lunesdale): Is my right hon. Friend aware that employees at the two nuclear power stations at Heysham in my constituency will be most approving of his statement and of the way in which he is seeking to privatise the nuclear industries of Scotland and England jointly? No doubt the alternative would have been that Scottish Nuclear would have somehow acted in a predatory way to grab a couple of English power stations from my constituency. I am sure that the good folk in Scotland would not have wanted that

and will realise that it is logical to promote the whole of the British nuclear industry as a British national asset for the benefit of all the British people.

**Mr. Heseltine:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right to place the emphasis on the overall national interest. As is widely known and would be expected, we considered a range of options but came to the view that, in the overall interests of the industry and of the United Kingdom, this was the best way forward.

**Mr. Matthew Taylor** (Truro): The Secretary of State's opening comments confirm that the industry is uneconomical—the private sector would build no private stations. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that to make privatisation work he has had to cherry-pick the profitable bits, while leaving the liability with our children for generations to come.

Can he answer the crucial question this afternoon? What does he expect to be the income to the Government from the privatisation in order to fund tax cuts at the general election? What does he expect will be the total liability of the remaining costs of Magnox and of those sectors to be privatised, which his review confirmed will not be wholly taken on by the private sector? In other words, what is the profit and loss account to the taxpayer? Is it not mainly loss?

**Mr. Heseltine:** The hon. Gentleman will realise that he has tried to put the worst possible slant on what is a perfectly logical industrial evolution. We are not proposing to privatise the older stations—where experimentation and the older technologies were developed. After we moved from Magnox to the AGRs and PWRs, such were the enhanced gains, efficiency achievements and cost structures that emerged, that privatisation became an option.

Apparently, the hon. Gentleman knows that the private sector will not build a further station. I do not know on what basis he makes that calculation. The White Paper says that it will not build one now. If he knows what energy demand will look like in the next 10, 20 or 30 years, he has a wisdom that is wisely contained on the Opposition Benches.

**Sir Trevor Skeet** (Bedfordshire, North): As the nuclear industry is environmentally friendly and very competitive on price compared with conventional fuels, will my right hon. Friend ensure that it has about 25 per cent. of our energy supply? On the transfer of the Magnox reactors to BNFL, will he confirm that that company will be fully compensated for the increased liabilities that are being placed on its shoulders?

**Mr. Heseltine:** My hon. Friend asks an important question. The transfers will take place on a commercial basis. The facts will be carefully considered and the arguments weighed at the time. I cannot give my hon. Friend an assurance about the specific market share. The essence of our energy policy is that we should have diversity of supply and competition between sources of fuel, so it is now for the various generators to seek the best possible deal in the light of what they can offer the market.

**Mr. Adam Ingram** (East Kilbride): Does the President of the Board of Trade accept that last week we accurately speculated on the content of his announcement and that that speculation united all political parties in Scotland, provoked a furious reaction from the business community and caused the *Financial Times* to call the proposal a "folly". Does he accept that the people who work in Scottish Nuclear's headquarters in my constituency will believe none of the assurances that he gave today? He told the House that the new headquarters of the corporate company will be enshrined in law for 10 years. Will he give the same guarantee to those currently employed at Scottish Nuclear's headquarters in my constituency?

**Mr. Heseltine:** The hon. Gentleman will understand if I say that I find the Opposition's allegations about what people do and do not believe slightly lacking in intellectual credibility for one overriding reason: whenever we have privatised an industry, the Opposition have said that it is unpopular, nobody wants it and it will destroy jobs and investment. It has now been proved that they were so wrong that they are not now prepared to undertake to re-nationalise a single industry. They have torn their party apart by removing the conditions of clause IV because they know that the whole intellectual case against privatisation is bankrupt.

**Mr. John Whittingdale** (Colchester, South and Maldon): May I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement, which is undoubtedly in the best interests of the nuclear industry and consumers? Will he say a little more about the fate of Magnox stations, such as Bradwell in my constituency? Will he confirm that those stations will remain open for as long as it is safe and economically viable for them to do so? If they are closed, will staff employed there be able to transfer back to Nuclear Electric and work in its power stations in the private sector?

**Mr. Heseltine:** I know that my hon. Friend has a considerable interest in this matter. We hope that the Magnox stations will continue in active life, producing electricity on an economic market base. It is very much our purpose in creating the stand-alone company that it will become part of BNFL and have every incentive to maximise its performance. I hope that my hon. Friend understands that I cannot foresee how long those arrangements will be in place, although we hope that they will be long-term. I cannot foresee the employment consequences and it would be misleading of me to give the assurances that my hon. Friend seeks.

**Mr. Andrew Miller** (Ellesmere Port and Neston): The City institutions cannot even think in terms of the short life of this Government, let alone that of Stroutium 90, so how on earth can the President of the Board of Trade confidently say that the private sector will go for this package unless he is giving the industry away at well below its true value? Will the package give taxpayers' money to the President's friends in the City?

**Mr. Heseltine:** I do not know what the hon. Gentleman is worried about because if we can find no one to buy it, he will have no difficulties.

**Dr. Michael Clark** (Rochford): Is my right hon. Friend aware that those of us who were somewhat critical of the delay in producing the nuclear review now consider that the wait was well worth while, as privatisation is included in the presentation? Will the privatisation of the nuclear

*[Dr. Michael Clark]*

industry facilitate the construction of more nuclear power stations? What constraints, if any, will be placed on the private company in that regard?

**Mr. Heseltine:** I know of my hon. Friend's deep interest in those matters. There will be nothing except the statutory constraints, although planning and safety arrangements must obviously be complied with before one can proceed to build a new power station. Equally, we have given every support to Nuclear Electric in its bid to supply a nuclear station to Taiwan, and we shall give the industry every support in pursuing other world opportunities.

**Mr. John Home Robertson** (East Lothian): If one is shooting oneself in the foot, the clever thing to do is to stop pulling the trigger. May I tell the President of the Board of Trade that my constituents at Torness do not want to be privatised, and they certainly do not want to be shunted into a sham holding company, which would inevitably be dominated by its larger partner?

The President of the Board of Trade told us that the pill will be sweetened south of the border with a bribe of £20 per household arising from the lifting of the nuclear levy, but he was rather coy about the deal in Scotland. Will consumers north of the border receive an equivalent deal?

**Mr. Heseltine:** I explained that, with other reductions in electricity already forecast and the abolition of the levy arrangements in Scotland, something of the same order of reductions will take place. However, the House will be aware that Scotland starts from a position very different from that of England and Wales, because electricity prices in Scotland are already about 10 per cent. less than prices in England and Wales, so one is not comparing like with like. I do foresee significant reductions in electricity prices in Scotland, and that is much to be admired.

I find it extraordinary—although it reveals the attitude of the Labour party—that, when we offer to return to people the money that they themselves have earned, it is regarded as a bribe.

**Mr. Neil Hamilton** (Tatton): Will my right hon. Friend accept my strong support for that policy of privatisation of the nuclear industry? I speak as someone many hundreds of whose constituents are employed in that industry, and no doubt that contributed to the fact that the Conservatives retained control of the local authority in Macclesfield, in anticipation of the excellent announcement that was made today. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]

Was my right hon. Friend surprised at the sour note struck by the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham)? Considering that, for the past 15 years, the Labour party has been wedded to a policy of slow strangulation of the nuclear industry, there would not have been any review under a Labour Government because they would have continued their policies, which would have led to the destruction of the nuclear industry and the jobs of the right hon. Gentleman's constituents.

Is my right hon. Friend aware that 126 nuclear projects are going on or are in prospect in the next quarter of a century throughout the world, and that a huge business opportunity exists for Britain? Will not the nuclear industry be far better able to take advantage of that opportunity in the private sector than in its present position, which has existed for so long, where its managers have had to look over their shoulders at politicians to decide whether they can run their industry in the most successful way?

**Mr. Heseltine:** I knew, from the years that I had worked with my hon. Friend, exactly how much support I could anticipate from him for my announcement today, and I welcome the public revelation of that fact. I totally support his opinion. There would not have been a review by the Labour party. Indeed, all the evidence today is that it is trying to interfere with the regulators whose task it is to drive down prices in industry after industry, in order to find a range of politically acceptable nostrums. The only effect of that will be to keep prices higher than they could otherwise be.

I fully accept and greatly welcome the excellence of the announcement for Macclesfield. I realise that one of the great advantages of leaks is that a leak enabled that constituency to make so wise a judgment. I can assure my hon. Friend that I am now working on a range of policies to deal with less fortunate constituencies.

**Mr. Alex Salmond** (Banff and Buchan): Has the President of the Board of Trade already influenced the nuclear installations inspectorate? A spokesperson for that organisation is quoted in *The Herald* this morning as hoping that the Government's timetable for privatisation can be kept on track. Is not that inspectorate meant to be an independent organisation, fearlessly inspecting nuclear installations—not part of that madcap privatisation, and not hoping that it can be kept on track?

Will the President give a serious answer to the anxieties that exist in Scotland? Given the experience of companies such as Guinness, which made commitments that then were broken, British Gas and British Steel, in respect of which commitments were made as part of a privatisation process and then broken, and Britoil, in which case, the President will remember, there was a golden share, why should anyone in Scotland have any confidence in Tory promises, paper guarantees or golden shares that turn to base metal?

**Mr. Heseltine:** The hon. Gentleman will know that, as I said originally, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland will possess a share, either jointly with myself in respect of a holding company or individually in respect of Scottish Nuclear, to ensure that the proper safeguards are operated. We have gone to considerable lengths to discuss the matter with the parties concerned to ensure that there is a clear understanding of the Government's intention. I must say, more in sorrow than in anger, that I find it intolerable that the hon. Gentleman should think that the inspectorate is capable of being influenced—but he reads the newspapers, so perhaps I do understand why he believes that that is possible.

**Mr. Allan Stewart** (Eastwood): In contrast to the neanderthal, knee-jerk reactions of Scottish Opposition Members to my right hon. Friend's statement, I warmly welcome his decision to privatise the nuclear industry. As he knows, a substantial number of my constituents are employed by Scottish Nuclear Ltd. in East Kilbride. Will he confirm my interpretation of his statement that not only

will there be no job losses at East Kilbride as a consequence of the decision, but in fact it will create substantial additional employment opportunities?

**Mr. Heseltine:** My hon. Friend has represented his constituents extremely forcefully and we are well aware of the local concerns about the matter. He will know, as will all hon. Members who are interested in this subject, that there have been significant job losses in Scottish Nuclear in recent times. That is a feature of the modernisation of many of our major companies. I have made it clear that we think that some 100 jobs will be created in Scotland which would not exist if it were not for the announcement.

**Dr. Jeremy Bray** (Motherwell, South): Is the President aware that he is undermining the future of commercial nuclear power by hiding its capital costs from public view? If and when future hydrocarbon costs move in a direction whereby nuclear power becomes fully competitive, taking into account capital costs, is the President not aware that there will be a long lag? The nuclear power industry is so profitable and it is so ready to invest that it will bitterly regret the many years of neglect of research and development and investment under this Government.

**Mr. Heseltine:** The hon. Gentleman need not be so pessimistic. The fact is that it is the easiest thing in the world to hide the capital costs in the public sector, but one cannot hide the capital costs in the private sector. While I would be the first to recognise that the hon. Gentleman makes a valid point about the absence of clear financial disciplines under the present regimes, that is a criticism which could be levelled at the public sector owning and operating any industry.

The costs of the new company that we are talking about today will be clear. It will have to raise its funds from the market place and remunerate them in the proper way. I hope to see the market change and the hon. Gentleman may be right in expecting to see relative cost changes. It takes about 10 years to build a new nuclear station, and that is not an impossible time scale in the context of the hon. Gentleman's remarks.

**Mr. Den Dover** (Chorley): A few years ago the Government were quite right to hold back from privatising the nuclear industry. However, today's announcement deserves great praise because it shows that we are continuing the privatisation of the power industry in a practical and a pragmatic manner.

**Mr. Heseltine:** I am most grateful to my hon. Friend. I believe that he is right and, as with all the other privatisation measures that we have taken and have had to fight to get through Parliament, I am sure that this measure will prove justified also.

**Mr. Tam Dalyell** (Linlithgow): Why has no mention been made of the need for a group safety director to serve on the main holding company board? What engineering functions does the Secretary of State have in mind in the context of his statement about engineering functions coming to Scotland? Does he accept that, unless the apparatus of the safety monitoring mechanism and key engineering functions come to the headquarters, he might as well be putting up a brass plate in Edinburgh and little else?

**Mr. Heseltine:** I am surprised that it has taken the hon. Gentleman so long to come to that view. The nuclear installations inspectorate has operated for many years and it has the power to say whether it wants safety directors to serve on the boards of companies. When it was in power, the Labour party had every chance to influence the nuclear installations inspectorate.

The hon. Gentleman has asked a question to which the obvious answer is: the nuclear installations inspectorate has not thought it necessary, as part of its rigorous and world-renowned regime, to state that a safety director should serve on the boards of companies. I have no concerns about the proposal if the experts, who are charged by the House to carry out their responsibilities in the area, think that it is necessary. I would not wish to undermine the hon. Gentleman's credibility, but I must tell him that it would take more than a parliamentary question from him to persuade me.

**Mr. Phil Gallie** (Ayr): As a supporter of the nuclear industry, unlike most Opposition Members, may I welcome the move to privatise it? That is the only means of bringing about investment and further development. I also welcome the announcement of new jobs in Scotland, and the opportunities for more engineering jobs that will go with the investment and development. May I remind my right hon. Friend that, if he and his predecessors had, listened to Opposition Members, there would have been no Torness?

**Mr. Heseltine:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. We would not have had any of the great privatised companies either, if I had listened to the Labour party. It is simply because the Government have had the guts to do what they have done that we have so many world-class players, converted out of the public sector and turned into world-class private sector companies.

**Mr. Dennis Skinner** (Bolsover): Have we not reached a sorry state of affairs when the Government who privatised rain are now privatising radiation? What guarantee have we that the President of the Board of Trade will not do the same trick as he pulled with the coal industry and organise a shabby deal with one of his Tory friends, as he did when he sold the coal industry to R. J. Budge? Will he guarantee that this time he will not engage in a crooked deal—[HON. MEMBERS: "Withdraw."]—or refuse to examine it when requested to in the House? What guarantees have we that the same thing will not happen again?

**Madam Speaker:** Order. The hon. Gentleman has used language and accusations that are unacceptable in the House. I ask him—

**Mr. Skinner:** It was all on "Panorama".

**Madam Speaker:** We are not on "Panorama" in the House, thank goodness. I should be grateful if the hon. Gentleman would rephrase what he has just said—

**Mr. Skinner:** No. It was a crooked deal.

**Madam Speaker:** Order. I cannot accept what the hon. Gentleman is saying. If he wishes to rephrase it of course I shall accept it and call on the Secretary of State to respond.

**Mr. Skinner:** I have no intention of withdrawing the fact that the Government engaged in a crooked deal to

*[Mr. Skinner]*

sell off the English part of the coal industry to R. J. Budge—one of their Tory friends, and a director who had been discredited before the sale took place.

**Madam Speaker:** If that is the case, in accordance with the power given me by Standing Order No. 42 I order the hon. Gentleman to withdraw immediately from the House for the remainder of this day's sitting.

*The hon. Member then withdrew.*

**Mr. Douglas French** (Gloucester): Notwithstanding the commercial logic of privatisation, is my right hon. Friend aware that his announcement will cause considerable anguish and anxiety to my 900 constituents who work at Nuclear Electric in Barnwood in Gloucester? Is he aware that his statement, although strong on job creation in Scotland, said little about job implications in Gloucester? In particular, would it not be possible to reconsider the proposed changes on the Magnox front? Magnox could easily have been left in the hands of Nuclear Electric at Barnwood, as the management there recommended.

**Mr. Heseltine:** I want to ensure that my hon. Friend's views are clearly understood, and I should be happy to discuss those matter with him. However, the figures that he mentioned alone suggest that the cause of his concern may not be so substantial. We have talked about an extra 100 jobs in Scotland, and my hon. Friend is talking about a constituency interest involving 900 jobs, so it should be reasonable for us to allay his anxieties.

**Mr. Dafydd Wigley** (Caernarfon): As I have constituents who work in the two Magnox stations in Gwynnedd, and as that county has suffered more than any other and still suffers from the effects of Chernobyl, the President of the Board of Trade will understand if I press him on his statement about minimising back-end costs in respect of Magnox stations. Will he give an assurance that adequate funds will be available from the public purse, as necessary, to ensure that any decommissioning of those stations is done in a thoroughly safe manner and that no risks whatsoever will be taken when their life comes to an end?

**Mr. Heseltine:** Yes.

**Mr. Richard Alexander** (Newark): Is my right hon. Friend aware that his decision will be welcomed by the coal industry, which feels that its competitiveness has been undermined by the nuclear levy for far too long? Does he agree that, at long last, that industry can compete on much more equal terms with other potential providers of energy?

**Mr. Heseltine:** I hear what my hon. Friend says and, of course, it must be true, but the most exciting development for the coal industry is its enhanced competitiveness and productivity following privatisation.

**Mr. Malcolm Chisholm** (Edinburgh, Leith): Was not *The Economist* magazine right when it said that it was a short-term financial fiddle to help the Tories but not the country? Why should the Government cherry-pick the nuclear industry so that a few individuals can make a great deal of money, while the vast majority of the British people are bribed with their own money in the short run and have to face higher taxes to pay for decommissioning costs in the long run?

**Mr. Heseltine:** The hon. Gentleman will know that the same question was asked earlier and I answered it. In respect of the Magnox stations in the public sector and the Nuclear Electric stations in the private sector, there will be segregated funds to ensure that the costs of decommissioning are met as the consumption of electricity increases.

**Mr. Piers Merchant** (Beckenham): May I congratulate my right hon. Friend on a masterstroke? Is not the fact that he has been able to reach absolutely the right conclusion a tribute not just to him, which it is, but to the work of Nuclear Electric and Scottish Nuclear over recent years? Does he agree that privatisation will benefit the consumer with lower prices, the taxpayer because of the proceeds of privatisation, the industry by giving it independence, and British exports by setting Britain's nuclear industry free to compete and thrive on the world market?

**Mr. Heseltine:** My hon. Friend has, in summary, set out the excellent ideas that were enshrined in his pamphlet. I agree exactly with him. I should say to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Leith (Mr. Chisholm) that the segregated funds that I mentioned will be in the private sector, applying to arrangements in respect of Nuclear Electric and Scottish Electric. There are no segregated funds in the public sector, but that will not prejudice the spirit of what I said.

**Mr. Mike O'Brien** (Warwickshire, North): Should not potential investors beware? Has not the President of the Board of Trade said that he will not interfere with the competition policy of the regulator, who has said that PowerGen and National Power are too large and must divest themselves of certain parts of their organisations? Therefore, potential investors may be investing in an organisation that may be ordered to be broken up by the regulator shortly thereafter.

**Mr. Heseltine:** The regulator will want to comment on those matters, but the House will appreciate that, on the announcement that I have made today, the nuclear companies will increase their share of the market. If anything, we are enhancing competition by splitting the nuclear industry into a public and private sector. There will be a free-standing Magnox company and a privatised company. It is a matter entirely for the regulator to decide his own views, but competition is enhanced, not diminished, by what I have said today.

**Mr. Michael Stern** (Bristol, North-West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the success of the privatisation will depend entirely on the mix of assets, liabilities, income streams and planning permissions—such as that at Hinckley C—that are passed to the new company? In particular, will he confirm that the segregated funds for future decommissioning liabilities will consist of liquid rather than trade assets, so that the public can be reassured that there will be no core in 50 or 100 years time?

**Mr. Heseltine:** In respect of the private sector, following the answer that I have just given, we certainly

accept the spirit of what my hon. Friend says. We expect them to be cash or liquid funds, but we shall examine the matters in detail.

**Mr. Alan W. Williams** (Carmarthen): I disagree with virtually all the right hon. Gentleman's arguments in favour of privatisation, but does he realise that his announcement today will kill off the nuclear industry, that, if the nuclear industry had been in private hands, no nuclear reactors would ever have been built, and that the privatised nuclear industry that the right hon. Gentleman has announced today will never build any new nuclear power stations?

**Mr. Heseltine:** I do not know which Sunday newspapers the hon. Gentleman reads, but I could not help noticing that *The Independent on Sunday*, not a newspaper overwhelmingly committed to the Conservative cause, said:

"Privately owned nuclear stations are not unusual. Outside Britain, the majority are already in the private sector, including plants in the United States, Spain, Sweden, Belgium, Germany and Japan."

It is a little rash for the hon. Gentleman to suggest that none would have been built here under the private sector.

**Mr. Ian Bruce** (South Dorset): The House will not be surprised that my right hon. Friend believes that, as the review says, the private sector will not want to finance a new nuclear power station now, but if a future management of the company wanted to ask the private sector whether it was willing to finance Sizewell C, or some other nuclear power plant, to get on with that and to find the funds, would he encourage them if it could be done without any public subsidy?

**Mr. Heseltine:** My hon. Friend hits the nail on the head. As long as there were no public subsidy, and subject to the usual statutory procedures, I would encourage it, yes.

**Mr. Martin O'Neill** (Clackmannan): The Secretary of State has made repeated references to the importance of nuclear safety, and he has correctly identified the publicly owned nuclear industry as a major contributor to that safety. As the nuclear installations inspectorate is considerably smaller than many of its international comparators, what guarantee can the right hon. Gentleman give that, in the private sector, shareholders will continue to give the same commitment in terms of expenditure and resources to safety and investment in research so that the companies will be able to carry on in the future and the safety measures in particular will be stressed? At the moment, we have a small inspectorate and a large commitment from the nuclear industry to safety. How can the right hon. Gentleman guarantee that that will continue under the new owners?

**Mr. Heseltine:** It will continue in exactly the same way as it continued under the Labour Government when they licensed private sector nuclear sites. The same inspectorate will carry out its statutory duties. Neither this Government nor any other Government would dare to try to influence the nuclear installations inspectorate in, or prevent it from, the proper exercise of its duty. To suggest anything other than that is, frankly, to cast a slur on a distinguished group of men and women doing a thoroughly honourable job.

## Points of Order

4.27 pm

**Mrs. Alice Mahon** (Halifax): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. There is a report in the *Evening Standard*, and there has been a report on television, about a serious problem at the Homerton hospital, which had to close its accident and emergency department for 32 hours, arising from its inability to cope as a result of the closure of Bart's. There has just been a report of a man, seriously ill as a result of an accident, being turned away because of a bed shortage. I know that the Secretary of State for Health is facing the sack shortly, but surely, while she is still responsible for the national health service in London, she should be here making a statement on what is happening in London.

**Madam Speaker:** I have not been informed that the Secretary of State or any other Health Minister is making a statement today. But, as the hon. Lady is aware, we have a debate tomorrow on the health service in London. She may be fortunate enough to catch my eye and raise such matters then.

**Mr. Malcolm Chisholm** (Edinburgh, Leith): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. The Secretary of State for Social Security has said that he will make a statement this week restricting the funeral grant to £500. Has he said that he will make a statement to the House, which would be entirely appropriate in view of the mean-minded nature of the act, which will cause extreme stress at a time of great strain?

**Madam Speaker:** No, I have not been told that such a statement is to be made in the House. As the hon. Gentleman is aware, it is for Ministers to determine whether to make a statement by means of a written answer or orally at the Dispatch Box.

## Interpretation (Amendment)

4.28 pm

**Ms Jean Corston** (Bristol, East): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to eliminate sexism in the language of future Acts of Parliament and other instruments.

All legislation passed by Parliament is drafted in a form that assumes that the male gender defines humanity. We are all referred to as "he" or "him". No doubt I shall be told that the masculine imports the feminine, or that "he embraces she". That statement is often referred to as a joke; a joke which wears a little thin.

It is bad enough that legislation routinely excludes half of the human race, but sometimes it makes us appear ridiculous. For example, the Charities Act 1993 describes the powers and duties of the official custodian for charities. Section 2, sub-section 3 of that Act reads:

"The official custodian shall perform his duties in accordance with such general or special directions as may be given him by the Commissioners, and his expenses (accept those re-imbursed to him or recovered by him as trustee for any charity) shall be defrayed by the Commissioners."

That section, which was produced—I repeat—in 1993, contains five references to the official custodian in the male gender, yet when the Bill was going through Parliament, the official custodian was a woman.

The effect of my Bill would be that "he" and "she" would be used only when specific reference were made to a man or a woman—for example, when referring to the rights and duties of mothers and fathers in family legislation. All other legislation would be drafted in gender-neutral language, with the word "person" used where appropriate. That would not be impossible. It would not even be difficult. In February 1993, I introduced a private Member's Bill on miscarriages of justice. It was drafted in gender-neutral language, for which I received invaluable assistance from staff in the Public Bill Office, it does not reek of political correctness and it reads as perfectly acceptable English. All that is required is a different mind-set.

I am not the only person in Parliament who thinks that the language that we use is important. Baroness Castle started her maiden speech in the other place in November 1990 with the words "Fellow Peers" instead of the customary "My Lords". I first became conscious of sexist language about 20 years ago, during the setting up of the Equal Opportunities Commission by the then Labour Government. Certain sections of the media had a field day with jokes—which no doubt Ministers on the Front Bench are sharing at the moment—such as person hole cover for manhole cover and fire person for fireman. Now we routinely refer to inspection covers and firefighters. The use of the words "chair" and "chairperson" have been derided, yet when I look back to meetings where nominations for chairmen were sought, I remember that I always used to look around the room at the men present, and would go on to consider a woman if none of the men seemed suitable. Language frames our unconscious thoughts.

On 18 March, Madam Speaker, my determination to pursue this issue came to a head when I went to Birmingham for your installation as the chancellor of the Open university. During his address, the vice-chancellor confirmed that advice had been given that it was in order for you to become Chancellor. That was necessary

because the university charter, which was approved by Parliament, referred to the chancellor as "he". I cannot think of anyone more suitable than you, Madam Speaker, to be chancellor of the Open university, and although you and everyone present treated it as a matter of wry humour, I could not help thinking that it was ludicrous. The very idea that the drafting of that document should have excluded you and half the human race is simply unacceptable.

Women have never been given any rights by this place; rights have always been hard-won. Only in the middle of the previous century did the courts decide that the word "person" included married women. Until then, women had ceased to be persons in their own right once they married. The Council of Europe, of which Britain is a member, recommended on 21 February 1990 that member states should encourage the use of non-sexist language and bring the terminology used in legal drafting into line with the principle of sex equality. It acknowledged that the sexism characterising current western usage in most member states, whereby the masculine prevails over the feminine, is hindering the establishment of equality between women and men, since it obscures the existence of women as half of humanity.

We cannot have actions that are equitable without language that is equitable. Language is the mirror of society. Women must be able to see themselves in that mirror.

*Question put and agreed to.*

Bill ordered to be brought in by Ms Jean Corston, Ms Clare Short, Ms Harriet Harman, Ms Dawn Primarolo, Ms Tessa Jowell, Mr. Peter Hain, Mrs. Barbara Roche, Mrs. Helen Jackson, Mr. Clive Betts, Mr. Win Griffiths and Ms Angela Eagle.

INTERPRETATION (AMENDMENT)

Ms Jean Corston accordingly presented a Bill to eliminate sexism in the language of future Acts of Parliament and other instruments: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 14 July, and to be printed. [Bill 119.]

## Former Yugoslavia

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Bates.]*

4.35 pm

**The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd):** I am glad that the House is debating the position in the former Yugoslavia. I apologise to the House because, as I told the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark), a private commitment tonight will prevent me from being here for the winding-up speeches.

Four years ago next month, fighting erupted in the old Yugoslavia, briefly in Slovenia, then in Croatia. This autumn, it will be three years since a British battalion group first deployed with the UN protection force in Bosnia. The whole House agrees that it has done stalwart work, but we remain far from a settlement to the crisis.

In the past few weeks, fighting has once again returned to the front pages. Our attention has been pulled back to the precarious balance that prevails in Croatia as well as in Bosnia. There is a real risk of a relapse into substantial war, in place of the ragged peace of recent months. I can briefly update the House on the facts as I know them since we had our exchanges last week.

In Croatia, levels of tension are high, following the Croatian military action in western Slavonia last week and the shelling of Zagreb in response by the Krajina Serbs. Over the weekend, there have been reports of shelling of the remaining Serb held pockets in western Slavonia, and the situation in other areas of Croatia is also tense. On Sunday, UNPROFOR secured agreement from the parties to withdraw their forces from the confrontation line. However, as yet there is little sign of that happening.

I told President Tudjman of our deep anxiety in London on Sunday, and urged him to prevent further military action by the Croatian forces. Chancellor Kohl, who was with us, endorsed my comments. President Tudjman assured me that Croatian forces would take no further military action. That commitment has to be met.

In Bosnia, too, the situation is tense, although there have been no significant recent changes in the military balance. In the past few days, shelling and other exchanges of fire have intensified including at Bihac, Tuzla and the Posavina corridor. There was a particularly violent incident on Sunday, when the Bosnian Serbs shelled Butmir near Sarajevo, killing 10 Bosnian soldiers and civilians, and wounding up to 10 other people.

Some conclude from this upsurge of violence, both in Croatia and Bosnia, that we face a futile task, which it would be better to abandon.

**Mr. David Winnick** (Walsall, North): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Hurd:** I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman a little later.

We are not yet at the point at which, in our judgment, it is right to abandon the task. The work that we and our partners are carrying out in the former Yugoslavia may one day become impossible to sustain, but lives are being saved, towns and villages are being restored to something like normality, and a wider war is being averted.

*[Mr. Hurd]*

I should like to explain to the House the balance of our judgment, and we shall listen carefully to what the House says about that balance. As I speak, in our judgment the risks are undoubted, the benefits still real. So far, we have judged that the benefits outweigh the risks. We believe that is so today. It may not always be so.

There have been two sets of criticisms of our policy: that we should be doing a good deal more than we are, or that we should be doing a good deal less. Each time, we have, of course, often considered the alternatives. They have always seemed to us worse than the situation that they are supposed to cure.

We need to remind ourselves in what British interest our troops and aid workers went to the Balkans, and why they remain. In August 1992, 1.8 million people had been forced out of their homes in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Britain had taken the lead in establishing an airlift to Sarajevo to help feed and provide for those people, but the fighting across Bosnia and the lack of proper logistic support severely hampered the relief work. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees foresaw a humanitarian catastrophe that winter.

Beyond the human crisis, we saw a risk of sliding from local fighting, which of course is cruel and destructive, into a regional conflagration, which might spread beyond control. No one could or can ignore the fault lines that run through that part of Europe today, as they have for centuries. As the killing continued in Croatia and in Bosnia, we watched anxiously for the news of the first violence in Kosovo, Macedonia and elsewhere. We saw then, and they are still visible, the signs of the danger of a wider Balkan war, in which the United States of America and Russia would back different sides.

We were clear as to what we could do to save lives and contain the conflict. We were also clear as to what we could not do, and I have tried to be frank with the House about that at all times. We were not willing—not Britain, not Europe and certainly not the United States—to impose a settlement from outside by force. We could not start to build something new from the ruins of Yugoslavia while its peoples continued to tear down the building and fight over the rubble.

The main responsibility—again I repeat what I have said consistently to the House—for starting the war rests with the Serbs, but in essence these have always been civil wars. We cannot find peace by ejecting Croatian Serbs and Bosnian Serbs from their own lands in Croatia and Bosnia. The war in Bosnia has involved at least three parties, none of them a majority in that country. What military solution can there be in such circumstances? In practice, only an agreement between the parties will enable the different communities to live together in peace.

There has been a second, more common delusion: that somehow we should have gone in halfway. We might, say, help one side with our aircraft and bombs while they fight it out on the ground. I know of no Government whose military experts think that the use of air power could swing the balance of advantage in the mountains of Bosnia. Equally, if the arms embargo were lifted, the fighting would at least continue and, most of us now think, escalate.

Having waded thus deep halfway into the current, we would then face a choice of plunging headlong onwards, or retreating to the bank, as those whom we have begun to favour were swept away. At the beginning, half-measures often seem risk-free and a practical alternative, but the half-measures that I have mentioned, which have been advocated quite often in the House and outside, are neither practical nor risk-free.

**Mr. Winnick:** I should like to refer the Foreign Secretary to his response to me last Wednesday in column 332 of *Hansard* during answers to a private notice question. I had asked about safe areas. He said, in effect, that events had moved on. In view of the outrage, which he has already mentioned today, perpetrated by the Serbians against civilians in the capital of Bosnia, what is the purpose of designated safe areas if no action is taken to try to ensure that the Serbs do not take military action causing the deaths of so many innocent people? Perhaps he will respond to that.

**Mr. Hurd:** Anyone who has gone to Sarajevo in recent months knows what the purpose is. It has not been fully achieved, and the hon. Gentleman is right in his comment on what has just occurred, but Sarajevo has changed substantially. It is no longer a place where thousands and thousands of shells rain on it every week—it used to be. That is only a partial achievement, but it has been reached because the UN has been there and has been active. The hon. Gentleman's point, which I understand, and my answer illustrate precisely where we are.

If by some quick, surgical, in-out strike, we could collectively have brought all the suffering to an end, I do not doubt that we would have done so, but at no time in the course of all the bloody unravelling of Yugoslavia has a proposal to that effect been suggested which on examination made any sense.

Of course—I concede this to my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen)—we in these islands have no close interest in the detail of a further Bosnian constitution or in the precise relationship between a Croatian Government in Zagreb and its Serb minority, but we do—I hope that my hon. Friend and those who think like him, who are quite numerous, will agree—have an interest in stopping a war spreading across the map of Europe, particularly, as I have said, a war that would range the United States and Russia on different sides. Most of our constituents want in addition that we should play our part in saving lives and relieving hunger. Those are the two main objectives. The fact that we cannot do everything is not an argument for doing nothing.

**Mr. Calum Macdonald** (Western Isles): The Foreign Secretary has mentioned the UN mission, which is to protect safe areas and to save lives. Will he comment on newspaper reports that the UN commander in Bosnia requested air strikes to protect the safe area in Sarajevo from further shelling, and that that was overruled by the UN at a political level? Is it right that the judgment of the UN commander on the ground should be overruled in that way?

**Mr. Hurd:** There are several UN commanders, and there is a UN chain of command. That chain of command decided yesterday not to ask the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation to respond to the attack on Butmir. It is for the force commanders on the ground to recommend the action that they consider right in the circumstances. UN forces should maintain their credibility, and we support proportionate responses to violations of UN Security

Council resolutions. On occasion, that may call for robust action, including use of our air power, but that must be done with the approval of the UN chain of command.

We were caught between what might be called the unpalatable and the impracticable. We have sought to do three things. First, we have tried to contain the fighting. With the arms embargo, we aim to limit the fire instead of throwing on more oil. By sending UN forces to Macedonia—not British forces, but including American forces—we have deterred anyone tempted to make that country into a new battlefield.

Secondly, we have attempted—we have managed—to soften the war's effect on civilians. Tens of thousands of men and women from Britain and elsewhere—military and civilian personnel—are working in Croatia and Bosnia to save lives and alleviate suffering.

Thirdly, we have tried to create the conditions for peace. That involves soldiers on the ground mediating local disputes, brokering local ceasefires. It involves the diplomatic effort, slowly coaxing the parties by persuasion or pressure towards a settlement. That goes on all the time. Those people encourage the parties to see that war does not offer them or anyone a satisfactory answer, and they offer them a basis for peaceful negotiation.

As I said last week, none of that may seem dramatic. It does not lend itself to the rhetoric that goes with more violent action, but Bosnia has suffered too much from rhetoric and trumpet-blowing from afar. We have got on with the job that we believed we could realistically do. That is an honourable task for our forces, our aid workers and for our diplomats.

Thirteen of our troops, as well as two British aid workers, have been tragically killed in the course of that task. We work alongside others. The French have lost 35 dead; the Spaniards 14. Conspicuous individual contributions have been made, and I salute and congratulate the British officers and men whose awards for gallantry have been announced today.

So far, we have not succeeded in our peace-building efforts. If one can put it this way, the spider, despite repeated efforts, has not yet reached the ledge, but as Robert Bruce found, that is not a reason for no longer trying.

We have averted a wider war, and in large parts of Bosnia and Croatia we have brought a measure of peace and comfort to millions of people, mainly through the core of protective support for humanitarian assistance provided by UNPROFOR. The Sarajevo airlift, for example, has been a crucial lifeline.

**Mr. John Home Robertson** (East Lothian): Having seen for myself much of what has been achieved in Bosnia, I agree with all that the Foreign Secretary has said about UNPROFOR. He must surely acknowledge, however, that something is very wrong with the UN chain of command of which he has spoken, when General Rupert Smith, the UN commander in Bosnia, calls for an appropriate and proportionate response to deal with aggression against people in the protected areas, and that is overruled by political decisions.

**Mr. Hurd:** I have given our position on that; my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence may want to add his own knowledge when he winds up the debate. Of course, there is a UN chain of command, which—as the hon. Gentleman knows—is partly military and partly civilian. Any decision about air strikes must be approved by the chain of command: that is what the "dual key" is about. It is not possible for NATO or individual Governments to go against that. The conclusion reached yesterday was the conclusion that I have reported to the House.

**Mr. Tam Dalyell** (Linlithgow): The Foreign Secretary is aware of the widespread anxiety about UN operations as a whole. Is the root of the problem really the UN's shortage of money? Is that really the fundamental problem?

**Mr. Hurd:** No, the problem is not shortage of money. I shall sum up what I consider to be the fundamental problem, in a way that I hope the hon. Gentleman will find acceptable and relevant.

Two specific gains over the past year have not been fully remarked. Just over a year ago, the leaders of the Muslim and Croat communities in Bosnia agreed in Washington to halt their fighting and build a federation—on which American diplomacy is to be congratulated. Since then, most of central Bosnia—most of the area where our troops are—has been at peace. That is still a tenuous achievement; in Mostar, for instance, where there has been a huge amount of destruction, efforts at reconstruction are hampered by distrust between Muslims and Croats. Nevertheless, by signing that agreement, the two factions ended some of the most savage incidents and disasters of the war.

A second important move has been the rupture between the Bosnian Serbs and Belgrade. Last summer, President Milosevic decided to accept the contact group plan, and to seal the border with the Serbs in Bosnia until they did the same. I do not suppose that he acted out of sudden remorse for his earlier part in the crisis. The isolation of Mr. Karadzic and his followers over the past nine months has not itself brought peace, and some traffic over the border continues; but by and large, according to international reports that we have received and our own information, the border is closed, and that remains a real advance.

Ten days ago, I would have added a third success—the economic agreement and ceasefire brokered in Croatia last year. That has not been destroyed, but it is in jeopardy; I hope that it can be revived. The agreement was largely the work of Lord Owen, who has played an indispensable and—I must say—usually thankless part in the progress that has been made.

Our own military, humanitarian and political contribution has matched that of any other country. I want to update the figures, to dispel the idea that our troops or our aid workers are simply sitting there doing nothing, while being exposed to constant humiliation.

Today, we have 3,400 men and women in the British armed forces serving with UNPROFOR, and a further 3,000 serve in the wider Adriatic theatre. The Royal Welch Fusiliers are helping to protect the people in the isolated enclave of Gorazde. In central Bosnia, the Royal Highland Fusiliers are handing over to the Devonshire and Dorset regiment the task of cementing the fragile peace that I have described. The RAF has been flying the airlift to Sarajevo since it began in July 1992.

Much of the work is not headline, but low-key. Our troops patrol the confrontation lines. They help to build confidence between the opposing parties, man observation

*[Mr. Hurd]*

posts, broker local agreements and liaise between the factions. British forces have helped to repair roads, schools and houses, often while off duty. They have helped to reconnect electricity, water and gas supplies for thousands of people. New bridges have been built, hundreds of miles of aid routes kept open, and 1,500 mines cleared from 68 minefields. Our troops have escorted nearly 4,500 convoys, carrying 250,000 tonnes of aid, and the RAF has flown 24,000 tonnes into Sarajevo.

On the civilian side, Overseas Development Administration trucks and drivers are the backbone of the UNHCR fleet. They have run nearly 2,000 convoys with 150,000 tonnes of aid. The ODA has flown some 450 aid flights to Sarajevo with 15,000 tonnes of aid: that is nearly 40 per cent. of all aid flights to Sarajevo in the past year.

Other ODA programmes cover engineering, telecommunications and medical support; 20,000 refugees in central Bosnia have been given winter shelter. We are the third largest donor of humanitarian aid, after the Americans and Japan. The UNHCR acknowledges that the ODA is pre-eminent on the ground in Bosnia.

**Mr. Mike Gapes** (Ilford, South): Given the contribution made by the ODA and other British civilian personnel, will the Foreign Secretary give us an idea of the implications for that contribution of any withdrawal of the military contribution?

**Mr. Hurd:** I shall try to do so shortly.

I listed those contributions because they are not always remembered, and I feel that those concerned—and all of us—can be proud of them. They make a real difference to the lives of the victims of war. I readily accept, however, that that is not enough: it is softening the problem, but not solving it. The flare-up of fighting in western Slavonia last week, and the intransigence of the Bosnian Serbs, show the limits to what can be done if the parties themselves are unwilling to co-operate.

We have said before that UNPROFOR can remain only for as long as its task are practicable and the level of risk manageable, but how do we measure that? That is the question that interests many hon. Members who are in the middle of the argument. We must plan for the possibility that we shall have to withdraw; certainly our presence should not be taken for granted.

The UN is not there as a permanent armed relief operation. It went for an humanitarian purpose, and its most important work now is to help the political process. That, however, requires the parties to make certain choices as well. The UN cannot just stay in the Balkans for ever to pick up the bits and save people from the consequences of their own actions.

There is an urgent need, and a longer need. The urgent need is clearly for another stop to the fighting. As I have reported, there is a new ceasefire in Croatia, and we expect both sides to respect it. In Bosnia, we need to renew the cessation of hostilities that expired last week. Those are not ends in themselves, but they are preconditions for progress towards a lasting settlement.

What should be the form of that settlement? We cannot impose it, but the blueprints that have been suggested for it exist. The parties know them well, as do those who have followed them in the House. In Croatia, we favour the reintegration, under Croatian sovereignty, of the Serb-controlled areas, with autonomy for areas where the Serbs constitute a majority. In Bosnia, we have suggested a loose union of the Muslim-Croat federation and the Serb regions. The Bosnian Serbs would need to return much of the land that they now occupy.

**Mr. Macdonald:** Will the Foreign Secretary give way?

**Mr. Hurd:** I have already given way to the hon. Gentleman once. I suspect that he may be trying to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The contact group is working hard to secure mutual recognition between Bosnia and Serbia and Montenegro. That mutual recognition could transform the prospects for peace. The Bosnian Government endorsed that idea, and if President Milosevic were to do the same—which is not impossible—he would be entitled to further relief of sanctions. Those are the ideas that we put forward—when I saw "we", I mean unanimously, in the contact group. But there is only so much that we outsiders can do. We can point the parties towards the negotiating table, but only they can decide when to sit down and talk seriously about peace.

I return finally to the question of British troops, which is in the forefront of the minds of most right hon. and hon. Members.

**Sir Patrick Cormack** (Staffordshire, South): Before my right hon. Friend moves on to that important aspect, will he reiterate that when—I will not say "if"—a peace settlement is achieved, it will be internationally guaranteed, with all that that implies?

**Mr. Hurd:** Yes. Clearly that is necessary. As my hon. Friend knows, there are plans to make that effective in practice.

As to the presence of British troops. I understand the concerns in this House about British troops being involved in a long-drawn-out, inconclusive and risky operation. I understand also why some right hon. and hon. Members want to draw a line. The House should not delude itself about the consequences of the withdrawal of UNPROFOR. I say "the withdrawal of UNPROFOR", because I do not think it would be conceivable for British troops to withdraw alone, leaving in the lurch the contingents alongside whom our soldiers work—such as the New Zealanders, French and Spanish—and whose lines of communication they protect.

NATO plans for withdrawal are being finalised. It would be a difficult operation and could result in a flare-up of the war in Bosnia, greatly increased suffering and atrocities, and perhaps a spilling over of the war into other parts of the Balkans. The dangers and miseries of that need no description. But there are circumstances, as we have made clear to all concerned, in which we would have to withdraw. If the arms embargo were lifted and arms flooded into the area, we and most other troops contributors would judge that the time had come when the UN could no longer fulfil a worthwhile mission as peacekeeper. That is one possibility.

If, even with the arms embargo, the fighting flared up because the generals on either side mistakenly thought that they could achieve military victory, in those circumstances, too, the risks to our troops might outweigh the good they could do. There is a third possibility. If, month in month out, there was no sign of an effective peace process, and if it became clear that the parties were

simply exploiting the presence of the UN force to advance their military position, then, too, the troop contributors might decide that their presence was no longer contributing to peace.

We constantly review that judgment month after month, as we must, and as others do. By "we", I mean the British Government. It is a difficult judgment, and I do not think that this is the last time that the House will have to debate such a choice. Such choices may well be the pattern for the future. The nature of foreign policy has changed. Few choices are now absolute between good and evil. There is no longer that which President Reagan called an evil empire. There is no longer the likelihood of a world war. In my judgment, although this is more controversial, we are not likely often to see one sovereign state invading another, as Iraq invaded Kuwait.

We see something different in Bosnia, Somalia, Mozambique, Rwanda, Cambodia, Angola and Nagorno Karabakh—something to which the House is getting used, but with which it is finding it extraordinarily difficult to deal. We see relatively new-born states without natural frontiers. There are frontiers drawn on the map as a result of history. Frontiers are needed in a world of nation states, in which we shall go on living.

Few people seriously argue in most of those cases that the problem can be solved by shunting frontiers a few miles east, west, north or south. There is no magic in redrawing maps in any of those cases. Within each of those states, there are divisions, whether ethnic or ideological. They are usually divisions deepened by recent or ancient atrocities and by distortions of history.

Faced with the suffering that results, and about which many of our constituents feel strongly, some people and organisations in this country, and some non-governmental organisations, are beginning to argue for an international system based on the imperial principle of the international community imposing from outside a particular solution and form of government—as we did with the slave trade, for example. Others try to over-simplify the truth. It is much easier to make choices if one believes that there is nothing but virtue on one side and nothing but vice on the other. But making the choice easier by creating heroes and villains, when in fact the responsibility is shared, does not produce the right answer.

There will certainly be many places and many cases where we in Britain feel that we cannot help. We cannot be everywhere and try to play a part in everything. But there will be cases, such as Cyprus, Rwanda—where we went in and came out, and did a good job—and now Angola, where the British Government judge that it is in our interest to contribute with others to an international effort. I greatly welcome the professionalism and enthusiasm of our armed forces for that kind of task.

Individual judgments will be difficult. Our contribution needs to be clearly thought through and defined, but a crucially important point when debating foreign policy, in respect of Bosnia or elsewhere, is that it is a British interest to make from time to time, as in Bosnia, a specific and considered contribution to a more stable and less savage world.

5.6 pm

**Mr. Robin Cook** (Livingston): Right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House are united in grave concern at the deteriorating conflict throughout the former Yugoslavia. Yesterday the House did not sit as a mark of respect for the 50th anniversary of peace in Europe. That gives added point to finding ourselves debating today the outbreak of war in one part of Europe. We have seen in Bosnia and Croatia, as so often before, that civilians pay the price for the willingness of their politicians to maintain war. Both sides of the House deplore civilian casualties—whether it involves Serb civilians fleeing from Croat soldiers, Croat civilians being hit by rockets in Zagreb, or Muslim civilians being hit by the mortar shells that fell on Sarajevo and Tuzla over the weekend.

Also of concern to the House is that a principal victim of the renewed fighting of the past week has been the United Nations and its mandate in the former Yugoslavia. It is only one week since the ceasefire formally came to an end. In that time, UN mandates have been comprehensively breached. The no-fly zone over the whole of Bosnia was breached when planes flew over Bihac. The heavy weapons exclusion zone around Sarajevo is allegedly being breached at present by heavy mortars in the hills around the city and by the alleged presence of two tanks within the exclusion zone.

The UN mandate for safe havens has plainly been broken time and again in the last seven days—most recently this weekend, with the shelling of Tuzla. The UN agreement for the opening of Sarajevo airport has been broken by the inability to fly planes in and out of that airport with safety. As someone who has flown out of Sarajevo, the Foreign Secretary will agree that it is not an airport in the sense that most right hon. and hon. Members would recognise. The terminal is a portakabin without windows. Nevertheless, that rudimentary structure provided a vital link between Sarajevo and the outside world, which has now been severed again. The UN-protected areas in Croatia have been violated by the Croatian Government, who sent a substantial military force to storm across the UN line around one protected area.

I find it disturbing that none of those challenges to the UN mandate has been met with a UN response. It is only too clear that some parties to the conflict have used the last four months of ceasefire to apply the three Rs of regrouping, refunding and rearming. The question is, what has the UN been doing during those four months? What has it done to prepare the safe haven for the likely resumption of hostilities? What has been done to try to achieve the best of all outcomes for the safe havens—demilitarisation—so that they do not provide legitimate military targets within the UN areas?

What makes it perhaps most surprising that we find ourselves caught unawares by the resumption of hostilities is that the breakdown of the ceasefire should itself be a surprise. I visited Bosnia in the first week of January. After bumping around in a Land Rover for three days across the tracks in Bosnia, I can tell the House that I am not surprised that it is easy to get a ceasefire in Bosnia around the middle of winter. The temperature there is below 5 deg C; there is frequent snow; visibility is very poor. Those are not the conditions for fighting an infantry war, which is why there is normally a reduction in military activity in winter. The test of any ceasefire was bound to come in the spring.

I do not believe that the cessation of hostilities need be a surprise, given the positions of the two major participants. The Bosnian Government made it perfectly clear to me when I visited them that they had no intention

*[Mr. Robin Cook]*

of extending the ceasefire if there were no agreement on the contact group peace plan by the time that the ceasefire came to an end. That position is understandable.

We have to understand that the Bosnian Government do not want the present confrontation line to become frozen into a permanent division of Bosnia. The ghost that haunts Bosnia is the green line of Cyprus, where for 20 years a partition has been drawn along where a ceasefire line was negotiated. Equally, on the other side, the leadership of the Bosnian Serbs plainly had no intention of giving up the territory that was required if they were to agree to the contact group peace plan, nor had they any intention of honouring the terms of a ceasefire in which they were moving spirits.

Article 7 of the ceasefire that they signed at the end of December explicitly states:

"The parties agree to assist fully in the total restoration of utilities and the establishment of joint economic activities aimed at the normalization of life in all territories, and in particular, in and around the Safe Areas."

If that meant anything, it must have meant opening up access to Sarajevo and lifting the siege.

Far from honouring that article, the Serbs have tightened the noose around Sarajevo, which now has less contact with the outside world than it had before the ceasefire. Radovan Karadzic, who may have prime responsibility for initiating the ceasefire, also has to accept prime responsibility for sabotaging it. Given that that breakdown of the ceasefire was predictable—and, indeed, predicted—I find it puzzling that there has been no response to the repeated violations of the UN mandate that have followed in the wake of the collapse of the ceasefire.

The Foreign Secretary said that the Government and the UN would support a proportionate response to violations of the UN mandate. I understand that, and I fully share that view. We have to ask the Foreign Secretary and the Secretary of State for Defence why there has been no response, because, at present, the reaction of UN and UNPROFOR forces does not appear to be proportionate to the events of the past week.

I fully agree with what the Foreign Secretary said about our inability to impose a solution by military intervention. The big problem with imposing a solution by military intervention is not whether we could successfully carry it out but how long we would have to stay to make the political settlement stick and how we would get out after imposing a political settlement that nobody wanted until the military arrived.

I also agree with the Foreign Secretary that there are severe limitations on air power. It is a low-intensity ground war that cannot be won from the air alone. It is difficult terrain with successive mountain ranges which give only short spans over which a target is visible. It is not, as some Americans sometimes appear to imagine, the easy desert terrain in which Operation Desert Storm was waged from the air.

Nevertheless, I still take the view that the UN could have been more robust in the use of limited air power in response to local violations. I continue to take that view despite an extremely aggressive encounter with General Sir Michael Rose in Sarajevo in which, I might say, he carpet bombed me, because I had maintained that view in an article before I went there. If he had been as robust with the Serbs as he was with me, I would feel more content with his record in Bosnia.

The last time that air power was used by the United Nations was six months ago in Banja Luka, in retaliation for the bombing of Bihac. The bombs were not dropped on the airport buildings, or on the planes that carried out the Bihac bombing, but on the runway, which was operational again in 48 hours. Its operational capability was demonstrated only a fortnight ago when planes using the same runway again bombed Bihac. There has been no use of air power since.

Last month, at Question Time, I referred the Foreign Secretary to the statement by Colum Murphy, an UNPROFOR spokesman in Sarajevo, who said on 28 March:

"Attacks that come from the outside and deliberately target civilians will meet a determined response, including the use of air power".

Since that statement was made, such attacks targeting civilians have happened in Bihac, Sarajevo and again this weekend in Tuzla, all three of which are UN safe areas. We understand from exchanges earlier that General Rupert Smith asked for a response to the attack on one of those safe areas. That request was refused by people higher up the UN's civilian chain of command. Why make a threat if we are not prepared to carry it out?

The next time that we make such a threat, what possible reason would there be for the Serbs, or anyone else, to listen to that threat? Every time that our bluff is called in the former Yugoslavia, the UN loses part of its authority. A major casualty of the events of the past week has been a further loss in the little authority that the UN has left. That will have repercussions well beyond Bosnia.

**Mr. Winnick:** I fully support my hon. Friend. Does he agree, that every time that the Serbs take military action, such as the atrocity over the weekend, and no military response is made to safeguard the safe areas, the Serb military commanders will believe that they can get away with it? As a result, such actions have been taken time and again, as my hon. Friend said. Should it not be made clear to the Serbians that such atrocities against safe areas will definitely result in a military response? If it is not made clear, then, as the Foreign Secretary said last Wednesday, they will have no need to worry and can continue to tease and taunt the international community.

**Mr. Cook:** I would have preferred it not to become known that General Rupert Smith had requested the use of air power. Unfortunately, the whole world, including the Bosnian Serbs, knows that he requested it and was overruled. What signal does that send to those with whom he will have to negotiate in future? It is the first law of negotiations that one backs up the person sent to carry out the negotiations. What loss of authority is involved for General Rupert Smith the next time that he issues an instruction to those with whom he is dealing?

In response to my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) I must say that, next time, a threat will not do. I doubt whether such a threat will be taken seriously until one is implemented.

**Sir Patrick Cormack:** Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, until Mr. Akashi is removed, there will be little credibility for the UN operation in Bosnia?

**Mr. Cook:** I would not wish to personalise a profound issue that involves a number of different institutions. One of the key issues is that there is some tension between the military presence in Bosnia and UN civilian presence. One of the lessons of the Bosnian experience is that we must look closely at how they relate to each other and where the command chain rests in any future operation. Unless the operation in Bosnia is a success, it is difficult to see how any operation will be launched by the UN in similar circumstances in the future.

Last Wednesday, one or two Back-Bench Conservative Members demanded immediate withdrawal and put forward a position of extreme isolationism. The hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) said that we had no strategic interest in the former Yugoslavia. I think that Britain has a profound strategic interest in the future authority of the UN. We are, after all, a permanent member of the Security Council. We cannot claim continuing membership of the Security Council unless we recognise the authority of the UN as one of our strategic interests.

I believe that we make an error if we think that we can escape by leaving the peoples of the Balkans to stew in their own troubled waters. The history of the Balkans shows that troubles there have a capacity to boil over into the rest of Europe. If the conflict escalates, it will have wider repercussions in which we may well have a strategic interest. It will complicate our relationship with Russia if it feels obliged to intervene on the Serbian side. It could potentially reopen the conflict between Turkey and Greece with profound consequences for our negotiations with Cyprus.

Perhaps most fundamentally, it will gravely complicate what may be one of the most important foreign policy issues of the turn of the century, which is the relationship of Europe to the world of Islam, which will not take easily to indifference on the part of Europe to the fate of the largest Muslim population within Europe.

We are not in Bosnia out of altruism—we have wider strategic objectives in preventing the spread of that conflict. However, we should not forget that one of the reasons for being there is that our constituents saw the victims of war on television and responded with a considerable sense of solidarity and sympathy to what they saw.

Those who oppose a continuing presence in Bosnia should not seek to identify their view with the views of the troops on the ground. I have had the opportunity to visit them and I should like to record my appreciation of the help that I obtained from the Foreign Office and the British forces to enable me to do so. It is important that the House recognises the courage with which our troops have discharged the duty that the House has laid upon them. We should not forget that some of those we sent there have paid the supreme sacrifice.

Most of our troops in Bosnia are living in exceptionally primitive conditions. Throughout the winter in Gorazde there was no electric light despite the fact that daylight lasted for only a few hours. Yet, on the bases I visited, morale appeared high. One could witness the strong satisfaction of people who believed that they were doing a valuable job and were dedicated to doing it. However, we all have to have some caution as to how we interpret morale on an overnight stop.

When the company sergeant major marches one round the back of the barracks and bellows, "MacPherson, are you happy with your living quarters?" and MacPherson says, "Yes sir", one knows not to take that reply at full face value. However, the impression was that there was good morale and the sense of a rewarding job being done with commitment. That sense of satisfaction comes from the troops knowing rather better than some of the media over here what they had achieved. It is worth repeating that.

Over the past two winters, our troops have helped to provide food and fuel to over 2 million civilians of all three different ethnic groups in Bosnia. Over the past year, they have restored gas, electricity and water to communities that had lost those essential utilities. In Vitez the British troops have reopened the schools so that the children can return to education. Most important of all, the British troops in central Bosnia have played a key role in helping to negotiate and enforce the ceasefire between the Croat and Muslim populations who were previously engaged in a conflict which probably killed more people than the war between the Serbs and the Muslim population. No officer I met during my time there wanted to put an end to the work that they were doing.

Of course, if the commanders on the ground come back with an assessment that the deteriorating situation means that their men face unacceptable risks, they must be withdrawn. I hope that those would be the only circumstances in which the British presence would be withdrawn. I support the Foreign Secretary in his view that our presence in Bosnia is worth while, and that we should continue to be there.

As politicians, we have the right to ask our troops to remain only if we are doing everything possible to achieve a settlement. What can be done to make a settlement of the dispute more likely? I want to outline three priorities which should guide our activities in the immediate future. The first priority must be to restore the authority of the UN.

I should like to record some anxiety about our attitude to our troops in Gorazde. As I understand it, we have said that we will not renew our presence there after September as there is no fuel to run the vehicles because the Serbs will not allow fuel through to the troops in the safe area. If the troops have no fuel, there is no alternative to them withdrawing. However, with all the logistical capacity available to us, is there no way that fuel could be got to Gorazde? If we withdraw in the face of that pressure, what message does it send to the Serbs who will be able to believe that they can treat with impunity the claims of the military and that the UN will leave the safe areas? Which safe area will then find the noose tightening next time round?

The second priority must be to maintain pressure on the leaders of the two countries on either side of Bosnia who orchestrate much of the activity of the Serb and Croat populations within Bosnia. I hope that there will be no step to reduce sanctions on Serbia until Mr. Milosevic has at least recognised Bosnia and accepts full closure of his border with the Bosnian Serbs. To do anything that would relax sanctions until we achieve that outcome can only encourage the Bosnian Serbs to believe that, in the fullness of time, the world will come to live with the present distribution of territory inside Bosnia.

*[Mr. Cook]*

I know, because the Foreign Secretary has written to me, that he met President Tudjman during the VE day celebrations, and that President Tudjman gave him an assurance that there would be no further military action inside Croatia. I must ask the Foreign Secretary a question: did not Croatia give similar assurances during the negotiations of the trade agreement from which it got association status with the EC?

**Mr. Hurd:** On a point of fact, there is no such agreement. Discussion is taking place with Croatia, but there is no agreement, and it is clear to me and, I hope, to our partners, that there could be no agreement with Croatia until we are satisfied on that sort of point.

**Mr. Cook:** I welcome that intervention, and I support the Foreign Secretary entirely in his view that there could be no decision by the European Union to grant association status to Croatia until we are satisfied that Croatia is prepared to recognise the authority of the United Nations, and will not seek, by military power, to overturn UN mandates.

I wish to spend rather more time on my third priority because it is the most profound of the three. The time may have come to reconsider the cartographic diplomacy that has marked our approach to Bosnia. The history of the past three years is studded with various different maps of Bosnia—the Vance-Owen plan, the Owen-Stoltenberg plan and the contact group peace plan. They all have in common the feature of approaching diplomacy on the basis of drawing lines on a map.

There are dangers with that approach. One danger is that one can legitimise the gains made by military conquest. One may even provide an incentive to military aggression by having made plain where one would tolerate the line being drawn on the map. The worst problem of that approach is that it accepts that the basic difficulty in Bosnia and the former Yugoslavia is a deep ethnic hostility, which can be separated only by a demarcation line in order to resolve the tensions on either side of it.

There is certainly ethnic hostility in Bosnia, which has been exploited by the leaders of former Yugoslavia. President Milosevic must accept the major responsibility for the tragedy of the past three years in that he has whipped up Serbian nationalism. While he has recognised in the past year the price that his economy is paying for the sanctions on his country, he has now found that he can longer control the puppets whom he helped to power in Bosnia and Krajina. He is not the first politician to discover that it is easier to release the force of nationalism than to bring it back under control.

Tudjman also must accept substantial, if lesser, blame. He was elected with the slogan, "Croatia for Croats", and wrote a constitution which states that the Croat state is an expression of the Croat people. That leaves little room for the rights of minorities, or for an accommodation with the substantial Serbian minority in Krajina.

The real problem which we have in trying to secure a reconciliation in the Balkans is that the two principle leaders have obtained and retained power through ethnic confrontation. It is therefore hard to see how they could survive the compromise necessary for a permanent agreement to be reached. The rest of Europe must ask whether we should accept that the only way to settle this issue is on the terms of those leaders which require us to impose apartheid on nationalist lines.

The ethnic differences are slight, and are not based on race or even language. They are based only on religion, but the Muslims in Bosnia are the least fundamentalist of any in the Islamic world. Indeed, I have heard it alleged that they are the Anglicans of the Islamic world. In recent history there has been a high degree of integration of the ethnic communities. One quarter of all post-war marriages in former Yugoslavia were mixed, and the schools were integrated before the war. Children from all ethnic communities went to school together in a way which they do not in Northern Ireland, or even in Scotland.

There may have been greater divisions in rural areas than in cities, but the tragedy of Sarajevo is that it was as cosmopolitan a city as any in Europe, and it possibly had a greater tradition of tolerance of religious diversity than most cities in Europe.

I ask those who argue that the only realistic settlement is to separate the ethnic communities whether they have really taken on board how unrealistic it would be to achieve that in practice. The ethnic communities live in alternating villages, and often in the same village. In Vitez, the confrontation lines between Croat and Muslim are only 10 yards apart across the same street. I submit that the only realistic permanent solution for the peoples of former Yugoslavia is for them to learn to live together with tolerance and mutual respect for each other's human rights.

If we are to try to contribute towards that, we must support the citizen groups and civic forums which are bringing together different ethnic groups, as well as negotiating with the political leaders. We must support communities such as Tuzla, which still has a multi-ethnic sector administration. Most of all, we must encourage and insist upon a free media. The power base of both Milosevic and Tudjman is that they both have total control over television, which has 90 per cent. penetration throughout the countries. That gives them a more powerful weapon than tanks and heavy artillery.

President Tudjman assured the Foreign Secretary that the action in western Slavonia was a limited action which would not be repeated. I understand that the liberation of that area has been reported on television throughout Croatia in terms of rejoicing, and that there has been no suggestion that this was a limited action which would not be repeated.

The UN special rapporteur suggested two years ago that one objective of the UN should be to fund a free and independent information agency. I suggest that one practical step which might have a significant impact on the politics of the Balkans is for the international community to consider sponsoring a television station to provide an alternative to Government propaganda and an antidote to the repeated poison of nationalist hatred.

There is certainly an adequate supply of Serbo-Croat journalists who would be willing recruits for a free media. Given the enormous investment which we have made in the military presence and humanitarian relief, it is perhaps strange that we have not yet put more modest resources into a vehicle to help provide the change of opinion which will be necessary to achieve a political settlement. The UN will always be responding to the actions of other players rather than setting its own agenda for development

if we focus solely on the military war and ignore entirely the propaganda war being waged by Governments on both sides.

The ultimate goal for Bosnia and the other nations of the former Yugoslavia must be an outcome which respects the territorial integrity of Croatia, Bosnia and Serbia and which provides freedom of movement within each state. There must be a supervised high degree of autonomy within the states for the ethnic minorities of each of them, and the right for those ethnic minorities to have some form of association with the members of the same ethnic communities in other states. Any respectable permanent settlement must include the right of refugees to return to the places from which they were expelled.

We will make a mistake if we imagine that we can achieve that outcome solely through negotiation with the leaders of the countries, and without reconciliation between the communities on the ground. The peace and reconciliation in Europe which we celebrated this weekend was based on a major programme of civic education in Germany after the war, and I doubt whether there is much prospect of peace and reconciliation in the Balkans unless similar civic efforts to achieve the same reconciliation between the communities is made.

Finally, may I echo the closing point of the Foreign Secretary? He was absolutely right to say that, while the House debates the specific and particular problems of the former Yugoslavia, we should not regard them in isolation. The tragedy that we should recognise is that the problems of the troubled former Yugoslavia are only too representative of the new nature of the threat to the security of Europe and the world.

Conflicts between ethnic groups and civil war within states are now more frequent than war between states. In the past four years, the UN has recorded three wars between states, but has also recorded 79 conflicts within states. Dealing with the complexity and bitterness of a civil conflict is much more challenging than dealing with the simple morality required to denounce aggression between states. It is a challenge that we cannot avoid because it is now a more common threat to world peace.

It is vital to the people of Bosnia and Croatia that a solution is found that offers them the prospect of permanent peace. But let us not forget that it is just as important for all those other nations with a common intention that the UN mission is a success. All those nations are also potential losers if it should fail.

5.37 pm

**Mr. David Howell** (Guildford): As the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) reminded us, spring has come to the Balkans, and the killing has begun again. Before I look at some of the things which we in this country should do or stop doing with our allies and friends, I would like to make one or two background observations which have shaped my view about how to proceed from the grim present situation. Everyone who is returning from the Balkans at the moment speaks of the way in which the spirit of hatred, and the spirit of war which follows that intense hatred and the yearning for revenge, has worked itself up to new heights.

The chilling remarks that Mr. Karadzic made when he visited some of us in the House a few years ago, which were broadly to the effect that the choice was kill or be killed, seem to have penetrated ever wider circles. Clearly, the atmosphere is such that we are as far as we ever were, if not further, from the necessary conditions for peace.

Even to begin starting the engines of reconciliation, about which the hon. Member for Livingston spoke with some eloquence, is a vast task. Obviously, it is one that we have to work at, but it leads me to the first pessimistic conclusion of my comments. Given that no will exists among the outside powers for decisive intervention, which is hard to define anyway, to halt the machinations of the extremists in Serbia, Bosnian Serbia, other parts of Bosnia, Croatia or wherever, we have to be reconciled to the fact that it could take many years to wind down the spiral of hatred and change the mood that is working itself up even now.

Once that mood and that type of war have seized hold—other such wars have lasted a decade or more in the post-war period—there could be years of the sort of spring killing that we are witnessing now. Unless we are prepared to recognise that it could be a very long process, we will waste a lot of energy. I am afraid that there will be a lot of rhetoric—trying to find solutions just around the corner which are not there.

The second general point is that we are suffering from static reporting in the media of a dynamic situation. We are looking at a different set of motives and alliances than those that existed a year or two ago. An alliance is developing between the Zagreb and Bosnian Croatians and the so-called Bosnian Muslims, who are not really Muslims at all. That is a misnomer that we go on using. As we know, there are Serbs and Croats in the Government of Bosnia.

As the hon. Member for Livingston rightly said, the scene is a mishmash of different groups, who bear little or no relationship to distinct groups of Serbs or Croats and certainly not to the Muslims. No such clear distinctions exist. There has been a constant tendency to depict the battle and the bloodshed in terms of those separate groups, when the only sensible separation is between those who lived in peace for years and those who wanted to stir up extremism and impose violently a completely different order for other ends. We should not be deceived by the propaganda to the effect that this has always been an area of conflict. There have been wars, but these people have lived in peace for years, in the same villages and families.

The reporting has been poor at bringing home to us the vast complexities of the situation. I disagree totally with those hon. Members, including, I am afraid, some of my right hon. Friends, who have referred to the conflict as a civil war. No description of what is going on in the area could be more misleading.

In some senses, the conflict has civil war elements, but it is a war of intentions and motives, many of which were definitely initiated in Belgrade, with the ambitions of Mr. Milosevic and his team, as they moved into positions of power. We know now that he fears that he has unleashed forces that he cannot control. He writes letters to Mr. Karadzic pleading that the future of Yugoslavia should be decided not by Mr. Karadzic but by acceptance of the contact group's peace proposals. It is too late. He should have thought about that when he started.

The reporting and depicting of what is going on has been bad, which makes it difficult for us to decide what to do. The immediate matter, however, is the role of troops in general and of our marvellous troops in

*[Mr. David Howell]*

particular, which rightly concerns the House from day to day. What should they do? Like the whole House and many of our electors, I have always wanted them to fulfil some humanitarian role. Increasingly, it is a task to which modern, organised military cadres are being put. They have to move in, in a way that no other forces can, deliver humanitarian help, food and medicine and connect up electrical and water systems. Our troops have done that job superbly and, as long as it is possible for them to do it, I hope that they will continue.

Also, if protected areas exist, it has always seemed a reasonable aim—if it can be delivered and I am not sure that it can—that they should somehow remain protected and that, where civilians think that they can walk around without being slaughtered or shot down, our military forces and those of other countries should do their best to preserve those conditions. It is not succeeding.

Who among us was not shocked the other day at seeing a Serbian sniper's cold-blooded assassination of an old lady as she got out of a minibus? She was shot down in front of the cameras and the telephoto lens. That is monstrous evidence that no areas are adequately protected, despite our wish that they should be. We heard about the difficulties at the weekend and we want some effective action—difficult though that is—in response to local violations of those protected areas.

Peacekeeping is another phrase that has crept into our discussions of the role of our troops. What sort of "peace" do my right hon. Friends think is being kept? From the Croatian point of view, although they are certainly not all virtue and goodness, they are being asked to keep a peace in which a large chunk of Croatia is seized territory, another is under Serbian control and another is occupied by Croatian Serbs, who for years were ready to live in a sort of autonomy. Perhaps President Tudjman provoked them and reduced their rights—I am not sure of the facts of that development—but they were prepared to live in Croatia as Serbs.

From the early days, when Vukovar was smashed, Serbian and the former Yugoslav federal forces seized chunks of Croatia. Would we want a peace in which that arrangement was left in place? However much the local people wanted autonomy and different cultures, if they were part of our land, we would want them to remain that way and not be declared as having questionable status, or be under another country as part of this "peace".

The "peace" also apparently means the partition of Bosnia, which from the point of view of the Bosnian Government must seem an intolerable peace to have to accept. As the hon. Member for Livingston reminded us, it makes no sense when one considers how people have lived for hundreds of years in those parts of the world, or of how they are going to live. However many lines are drawn on a map, whether or not the contact group's latest plan is accepted, and even after ethnic cleansing, there will be areas in which different groups are hopelessly intertwined—living in the same village or street, marrying each other and living in the same family.

I do not think that we would accept that sort of peace. It is not acceptable and, given that our troops are not being made part of a massive offensive force—no one is suggesting that—it is not right to impose on them the role of keeping that sort of peace.

I am no longer sure that the arguments put forward by my right hon. Friend and his opposite numbers in the European capitals for maintaining the arms embargo are still as convincing as they were. In practice, the arms embargo has long since been broken and heavy weapons are now available to the Bosnian troops. The only reason why they do not demand that the embargo be lifted now is that they believe that, if such an announcement were made, there would be an immediate Serbian-Bosnian onslaught, and they want to be ready for that.

The embargo is now irrelevant at best. It may even have been a mistake. The propositions put forward in an excellent new book, "A Short History of Bosnia" by Noel Malcolm, which I strongly recommend to the House, are extremely persuasive in that context. The embargo arguments were never strong and I am no longer convinced that the proposition that bloodshed would increase if it were removed is valid. Bloodshed is increasing anyway.

That is the gloomy and negative scene we face. Where do we turn for more effective solutions? Which key do we turn in which lock to check some of the bloodshed before it spreads further? I agree with my right hon. Friend that one of the keys is still in Belgrade. That is where the extremism began and where the power still lies to try to unravel the extremists' poison, which is destroying this multi-ethnic group of countries.

Belgrade could stop it. It could also stop the war with the Croatians in Krajina if it talked with Zagreb. Pressure must be maintained on Belgrade to keep the border blockades and stop fuelling the Bosnian-Serbs. It is not working at present. Although Milosevic says that he is maintaining the blockades, financing of the Bosnian-Serbs continues. They are receiving money and resources from Serbia, and that should stop.

Sanctions should continue to be applied. It should be explained to Milosevic that we are against not the Serbian nation but actions by the Serbian state, whether of omission or commission, which allow the Bosnian-Serbs to continue to fight, kill and hold on to territory.

The humanitarian role should continue and we should be careful about defining a peace which merely alarms the people who feel that they are losing by that kind of peace. We should certainly not designate our troops as part of that kind of peacekeeping. We must continue to put all our energies into the diplomatic process to try to get some of the seeds of the flower of reconciliation to grow. That is how we must work between Belgrade, Zagreb and the Bosnian Government in Sarajevo. It is not an enticing or positive menu, but it is better than trying to keep a peace that will not hold, claiming that we are doing things which we then cannot deliver, speaking loud words but not carrying the big stick to back them up, and promising that people will be protected but then failing to protect them. That is the shame.

Hon. Members sometimes ask why we bother at all. The hon. Member for Livingston was right to raise that question, as was my right hon. Friend with his usual eloquence. The answer must be given in general terms. First, this is a war generated in a potentially peaceful part of the world. Balkan wars have arisen from time to time but, generally, conflict has not been a mode of life for those peoples. It has almost been imposed on them from outside.

If violent extremism is victorious and we end up with partitioning, ethnic cleansing, bits of country carved out from other countries and a forcibly redrawn map, extremism will have won and that would be a loss for the rest of Europe. If we have not learnt that lesson from history, we have learnt nothing. Secondly, the conflict could spread rapidly to Vojvodina and Kosovo, where the extremist tendency promoted by Belgrade is ready to take a much firmer line that it has already.

My conclusion is that diplomacy must continue to do its best. The seeds of reconciliation must be planted, but it will take many years to get this right, given that we do not have the will to intervene decisively from outside. Our troops must not be asked to keep a peace that cannot hold and the position must be monitored at all times while they continue to do their brave and wonderful work.

5.55 pm

**Mr. Edward O'Hara** (Knowsley, South): I shall not discuss the areas of former Yugoslavia which have been dealt with earnestly and honourably by the Foreign Secretary, my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) and the right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell). I associate myself with their many wise observations on the position in Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia. I draw the attention of the House to another potential flashpoint to the south, which will no doubt be discussed by less honourable and right hon. Members in the course of the debate: the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia.

The importance of that flashpoint is that it is the one area of former Yugoslavia where the United States has deployed a small peacekeeping force. Hon. Members will be aware of Macedonia's internal problems: the substantial Albanian minority and other ethnic minorities, and human rights problems—an explosive cocktail indeed. Kosovo, which was mentioned by the right hon. Member for Guildford, abuts Macedonia. Fortunately, blood has not yet been shed in that part of former Yugoslavia, as it has in the north.

Attention may have been deflected from the danger in that area by the nature of the dispute between Macedonia and Greece, which is seen as being ostensibly over a name, although it amounts to more than that. A name is important as it gives an area an identity. I shall not indulge in a lecture on the ancient identity of the Macedonians and on Philip II of Macedon and Alexander the Great, but the Greeks were historically correct in the campaign that they launched in the early days of the dispute. Understandably, detached outsiders say, "But that is ancient history, isn't it?"

Nor shall I engage in a lecture on the falsification of the history of Slavo-Macedonia since 1944, although that, too, has much hard factual content. I simply remind the House that Tito's renaming of Vardar Banovina as the Republic of Macedonia in 1944 was a political statement. More than that, it was a territorial claim. It laid claim to territory in Greece and in Bulgaria. Notably, the objective was the warm water port of Salonika on the Aegean.

The Greeks fought a bloody civil war on that issue between 1945 and 1949, when we were celebrating the peace that was commemorated as recently as yesterday. Clause 49 of the constitution of the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia enshrines that claim and subsequent propaganda, especially by a political faction, the VMRO, has kept the claim alive ever since.

President Kiro Gligorov may argue that he cannot control the publications of political parties, but I believe that the adoption of the sunburst emblem of Vergina, recently discovered in Greek Macedonia on the coffin of Philip II of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great, is a wilful act of authorisation of that claim. If hon. Members wish to empathise with the strength of feeling about that emblem, it is as though the thistle were stolen from the Scots and adopted by another country. It is an emblem, but it stirs up passions.

President Gligorov has mounted an impressive propaganda campaign about that, which has deflected attention from some of the more substantial issues in that earlier dispute and, in great measure, has succeeded in casting the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia in the guise of the little victim of the big bully, Greece.

More recently, that attention has been directed at the stories of hardship and privation arising from the limited blockade that Greece has enforced of exports through Greece into the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia, but the very recent decision of the European Court, vindicating Greece's decision to impose that limited blockade, has at last directed attention at the substance. The European Court upheld Greece's contention that its national security was at stake, that there was a threat of war and that therefore, under the terms of its membership of the European Union, it was entitled to enforce that blockade.

It is a threat of war indeed, because that so-called little victim—the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia—has a box of matches and is playing with fire. There is a danger that wider warfare in former Yugoslavia will result. I am therefore pleased to note the success of the change of emphasis brought about by Greece's limited blockade on the former Yugoslav republic. It concentrates the attention of the major powers on what matters in the dispute between Greece and the former Yugoslav republic. The pity is that they have not yet persuaded Mr. Gligorov to concentrate on the issues.

Greece has no territorial dispute with the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia. It is almost unique in the Balkans in having no such territorial claims on any of its neighbours. Greece has demonstrated its desire to have policies of support and co-operation with its neighbours in that part of the world by its breakthrough in its relationship with Albania, on which both Governments deserve congratulations because thereby another potential flashpoint to the south of the Balkans was damped down. Greece is physically located in the Balkans. It wants nothing more than to achieve a similar relationship with the former Yugoslav republic, but it needs support to do so.

It is no wonder that, in matters of politics in the Balkans, Greece feels misunderstood. It cannot understand why, after it stood alone with the United Kingdom against the forces of fascism between 28 October 1940—Ohi day, as it is still called—and 27 April 1941, when Athens finally fell, its former allies now appear to be taking the part of forces against which it stood, especially when, after the second world war, it endured those further four years of civil war to hold the line against the communist advance to the Aegean. That was done for the United States and for the United Kingdom especially—the world powers of the time—and those Governments objected, in 1944, to Tito's change of the name of Vardar Banovina.

*[Mr. Edward O'Hara]*

Being located physically in the Balkans, Greece has a more intense interest than anyone in peace and prosperity in that region yet it is accused of rocking the boat in former Yugoslavia. It might, with justice, argue that the boat in former Yugoslavia was rocked in the first place notably by Germany, in its premature recognition of Croatia and Slovenia without perhaps working through the consequences before that was agreed, and by fellow members of the European Union, including the Government of the United Kingdom.

Greece bears no responsibility for the mess in the north of former Yugoslavia, which has been described at some length by previous speakers in the debate, nor is it guilty of trying to create a further mess in the south—quite the contrary.

If you will forgive an image that may lack the dignity that the gravity of the position deserves, Madam Deputy Speaker, one might compare what is happening in Yugoslavia to a dispute that is confined to a sack. In that sack there are warring combatants, in a mishmash of arms and legs, if I may echo the words of the right hon. Member for Guildford. It is a mess, but it is at least contained in the sack. One might regard the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia as the bottom of the sack. Greece holds the key to preventing that sack from splitting, and the dispute from spilling out further east and south.

I think it was my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) who mentioned the serious danger, if the warfare in former Yugoslavia cannot be confined to that territory, of the involvement of Russia and Turkey in future. They have more than a weather eye on what is going on elsewhere in former Yugoslavia at the moment.

I earnestly entreat the House to pay serious attention to the actual position in the former Yugoslavia. The internal problems of the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia must be resolved before that country can receive recognition beyond the conditional recognition that it has at present. I earnestly entreat the House to support Greece and to see the situation from Greece's point of view. We must help Greece to achieve and to sustain a relationship of co-operation and support with the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia and with all its neighbours in that part of the world for the sake of peace, security and prosperity in that area and throughout the world.

6.10 pm

**Sir Patrick Cormack** (Staffordshire, South): I will not respond to the comments of the hon. Member for Knowsley, South (Mr. O'Hara) in detail, but I suggest that his speech contained a degree of special pleading that is not supported by the facts. I share his love of Greece and his sense of indebtedness to the great civilisation that was born in that land to which we all owe so much.

I had the privilege of leading a large parliamentary delegation to Greece in September 1993 and, although I was overwhelmed by the friendship and hospitality that was extended to us, we were extremely concerned—to put it mildly—by the expressions of almost blind allegiance to the Serbian cause that were voiced by many Greek politicians. If the hon. Gentleman were to read some of their comments, he might recast his thoughts a little. Of course I agree that it is very important that Macedonia should not become part of a wider Balkan war; we are entirely at one on that point. However, Greece's handling of the issue has made that more, rather than less, likely.

**Mr. Michael Stern** (Bristol, North-West): Does my hon. Friend agree that, in putting the Greek case, the hon. Member for Knowsley, South inadvertently echoed the sort of language that was used in the 1930s about Austria?

**Sir Patrick Cormack:** I shall not be led astray by my hon. Friend, who has made his own point in his own way. I do not criticise my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, but it is a pity that neither the Foreign Secretary—we understand how busy he is—nor the Ministers of State are present to listen to the debate. When we debate important foreign issues in the House, I believe that there should be a greater presence throughout on both Front Benches.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tony Baldry):** In fairness to my hon. Friend the Minister of State, he has apologised to the House and explained why he cannot be here for the debate. He has to meet a number of Russian delegations who attended the VE day celebrations. It is very important that we maintain close relations with the Russian Government and the Russian people.

**Sir Patrick Cormack:** The Minister of State said nothing about that to the House. The Foreign Secretary made a passing reference to it which we all accept completely, as I did a minute or two ago.

**Mr. Baldry:** Will my hon. Friend give way?

**Sir Patrick Cormack:** No, I will not give way to my hon. Friend again. I think that it is important that one be able to make speeches without constant interventions of that sort.

A number of hon. Members who have spoken in the debate—particularly the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), who I think made a very thoughtful speech—have referred to the events of the past weekend. My wife and I were among the vast crowd that stood outside the palace yesterday, and we were much moved, as I am sure everyone was, by what we had gathered to observe, commemorate and truly celebrate.

However, for me, the celebrations were marred a little by the thought of what is happening in Europe at present. Anyone who has regard for what has happened in the Balkans, the very heart of Europe, over the past four years cannot help but feel a sense of disappointment and a degree of shame. I believe also that we are still on the brink of a full-scale Balkan war. I hope and pray that that does not happen, but we are not far from that eventuality. The west needs to adopt a degree of resolution, clarity and cohesion in its policy toward the Balkans that we have not seen to date.

I have been critical of our policy in the former Yugoslavia on many occasions. I still believe—I make no apology for reverting briefly to this point—that if there had been greater resolution in the autumn of 1991 when Dubrovnik and Vukovar were being shelled, and if the air and naval patrols for which some of us called had been sent in to deter the Serbs, we might have escaped the appalling catastrophe and horror of Bosnia.

A number of myths, which have formed the basis of our policy towards Bosnia in particular, should be exposed and dealt with. They lie behind the sort of vacillation that we have seen in the past 24 to 48 hours to which a number of hon. Members have referred already. General Rupert Smith asked that certain action be taken, but his request was countermanded by civilians on the ground. Of course I do not hold the British Government responsible for that incident; that would be absurd. However, I was a little less than happy about the responses that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gave to interventions on that subject.

I shall deal with the myths as I see them. Two have been referred to eloquently this afternoon. First, there is the myth that we are dealing with an area that for centuries has been rent by enmity between different races and religions. That is not true. In his admirable speech, my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) referred to the "History of Bosnia" by Noel Malcolm, which was published last year. That should be compulsory reading for anyone who is interested in that conflict. Anyone who has read that book would not perpetuate the myth.

My right hon. Friend and the hon. Member for Livingston referred to Sarajevo. In 1984, when it hosted the winter Olympic games, it was held up as an example to the whole world of mutual tolerance with people of different faiths living together in harmony. It was not the recent creation of Tito's authoritarian regime, as some hon. Members have suggested. The synagogues, mosques and Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches of Sarajevo were not built during the time of Marshal Tito. For centuries, the populations have lived together, intermarried and, as the hon. Member for Livingston said, been educated together. Even during the last appalling three years, many of them have stuck together.

In my office in the House I have seen the leaders of the Serbian Council, which consists of 200,000 Bosnian Serbs who strongly support a multi-ethnic Bosnia. Furthermore, as has already been said, there are still Croats and Serbs serving within the Government of Bosnia.

Here I come to the second myth on which I believe that policy has been too closely based. My right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford has spoken of it too. It is the myth of Bosnia as a Muslim country. That just is not true. Anyone who has had the privilege of meeting people such as Haris Salidic, the Prime Minister and former Foreign Secretary of Bosnia, and many of his colleagues in the Bosnian Government, knows that they are dedicated to the idea of a pluralist multi-ethnic state, not one in which people are put into artificial compartments that have never existed and that cannot exist if true peace is to return to that shattered country.

But how often have we heard, both on the BBC and even from Dispatch Boxes on both sides of the House at earlier stages, references to "the Muslims", as if Bosnia were a wholly Muslim-led nation, with a wholly Muslim Government? The hon. Member for Livingston said that the Muslims of Bosnia are, as it were, the Anglicans of the Muslim world. I too have used that term in the past, and it is true that it is difficult to imagine people less fundamentalist.

Yet what has happened over the past three years would have driven many people into the arms of the fundamentalists. That has not happened in Bosnia. It speaks volumes for the courage and dignity of the Bosnians, and their sense of balance and proportion, which they have maintained against the most overwhelming odds, that they have not been so driven.

On 3 March, I hosted a large meeting in the Palace of Westminster at which learned doctors from the almost totally destroyed medical centre explained how they were trying to rebuild the centre, and asked for help. We were dealing not simply with qualified doctors, but with some of the most eminent physicians and surgeons in the world—people who have perfected various techniques in brain surgery and other specialties, people who were in the vanguard in Europe before the devastation of the war. They want nothing more than to be able to get back into the vanguard of medical advance in Europe.

The third myth, which was also mentioned by my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford, is that of the civil war. Yes, he is right to say that there are elements of civil war, but they have developed. It all began as a war of aggression led by the old Yugoslav national army, which was largely Serbian and which Milosevic meant to use as an engine to create a greater Serbia.

My right hon. Friend referred to Milosevic in sensible terms. Yes, he is there and in power, and yes, it would appear that over the past 12 months he has begun to recognise something of the enormity of the monster that he has unleashed. But even now he could do much to make us believe a little more readily in his conversion if he recognised Bosnia.

Certainly, as has been said both by my right hon. Friend and by the Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Livingston, that must be a precondition of any lessening of sanctions against Serbia. We should not forget that we would be wise to treat with Milosevic and to make it plain in treating with him that we acknowledge that, at the very least, Mladic and Karadzic—already named by the investigators as potential war criminals—have a substantial case to answer on war crimes.

Here I come to my fourth myth. How often have we heard, in the House and elsewhere, about maintaining neutrality between "warring factions"? That term has been used time and time again. Yet one of those so-called warring factions is the legitimate and recognised Government of an independent sovereign state, the President of which was invited to London this weekend as a Head of State to take part in the commemorations and celebrations to which several hon. Members have already referred. One does not refer to the Government that one recognises of a state that one recognises as a "warring faction" in the same breath as one uses that term to describe people who have been guilty of some of the most appalling atrocities inflicted by man on man since the second world war.

Probably no one in the Chamber knows and cares more about the holocaust than my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern). Although, of course, one cannot begin to make comparisons in terms of size, some of the things that have happened in Bosnia rank in fearfulness and horror with what happened during the holocaust. There have been concentration camps, exterminations and mass rapes. We all know the figures that have been quoted and have not been refuted. Indeed, they have been reinforced by those who have investigated them internationally—the 30,000 rapes three years ago, and so on. Little children have been violated, and men have had their genitals cut off and the parts presented on

*[Sir Patrick Cormack]*

plates. Those are documented atrocities that certainly brand those who have committed them or connived in them as war criminals.

This is no civil war in the ordinary accepted sense of the word. It was unleashed by an aggressive nation determined to build a greater Serbia upon the ruins of Yugoslavia, and that nation is now beginning to realise that that is not on. So in future when we talk of the conflict, let us not be enslaved by those myths.

We need a more resolute approach. Although I have called for tougher action I have never advocated putting mass ground forces into Bosnia. I have said that the air strike, properly used, and the ultimatum, delivered and followed up, have a part to play. We saw the truth of that in February last year in Sarajevo, because the fragile peace that has persisted since then in that tragic city began as a result of the resolute action taken at that point by General Rose. On the day on which General Rose's award for gallantry has been announced, I congratulate him on that—but I also share some of the misgivings of the hon. Member for Livingston about his subsequent actions. However, one must acknowledge that the terms of engagement were less than clear.

When a firm decision was taken and the Serbs believed it, they backed off. I am of the school of thought, as are many generals with real experience, that, faced with firmness, that not very well trained army would not have stood up to proper air strikes. It is appalling that, after the carnage at the weekend, General Smith's request was turned down. If NATO and the United Nations are to regain credibility and authority, it is absolutely essential that we do not continually have our bluff called by brigands—for it amounts to that.

The conflict is wider and bigger than the subject of our debate. The signals that go out from the way in which it is handled are incredibly important as we struggle towards a new world order. If the United Nations is to have credibility and authority, it cannot be seen as a body of vacillating men and women who haver and waver and then do nothing.

What is the way forward? I agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford that, to a large degree, the key is in Belgrade. I make no apology for returning to a plea that I have uttered before in the House. As we are still on the brink of a Balkan war that could erupt, suck in Greece and Turkey—two NATO powers fighting each other—and have America and Russia supporting different sides, the leaders of the four permanent members of the Security Council that are involved—Britain, France, the United States and Russia—should come together for talks.

When I urged such a summit before, neither my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister nor my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary—and I greatly respect them both—dismissed it out of hand or said that it was a bad idea; they said that the time had not yet come, but there are occasions when initiatives have to be seized. The coming into power of a new French president provides just such an occasion, and I would like Britain, in the person of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, to take the lead, to seize the initiative and to invite President Chirac, President Yeltsin and President Clinton to meet, perhaps here, or somewhere else in Europe—I do not mind where the meeting is held—and to summon President Milosevic to a session of that meeting. Other interested parties should be able to participate when the big four have talked the matter through.

My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary, my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford and the right hon. Member for Livingston talk about a diplomatic solution. Of course they are absolutely correct, but we have to make sure that matters do not drift on, and that we try not to impose a diplomatic solution, but make it plain that Serbia has no future as an independent nation until it plays a full part in helping to bring about such a solution. We have to make it clear to Karadzic and Mladic that there is no hiding place for war criminals. They have a time to come to the table, but it is only a brief time, because we are concerned about bringing peace and reconciliation to a part of Europe which is at the heart of our continent and central to its future.

While I have never castigated or impugned the integrity or good intentions of my right hon. Friends—I am delighted that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence is in his place—I believe that there should be more urgency, and I hope that we will see action, if not this day, at least this month.

6.34 pm

**Mr. Menzies Campbell** (Fife, North-East): Since the affairs in the former Yugoslavia that we are debating began, the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Sir P. Cormack) has displayed a sustained and eloquent interest and, as his speech today eloquently demonstrates, he has maintained an independence of mind and judgment which, whether one agrees with every aspect of what he says, none the less should excite the admiration of all hon. Members.

By the miracle of technology, the events in which the hon. Gentleman told us that he and his wife participated yesterday will have been seen all over the world. They will have been seen in the former Yugoslavia, where no doubt many people find the sentiments to be entirely admirable but wonder why for them the reality is rather different.

People in the former Yugoslavia will see that the taking of life, looting, rape, destruction of property, conquest of territory, persecution of minorities and ethnic cleansing were all good reasons for going to war in 1939, and that, having successfully overcome them, there should be proper commemoration. But they will also ask why, when the same evils are abroad on the continent of Europe, there does seems not to be the same unity of purpose as there was in 1939.

It can legitimately be said that circumstances are different, but we are under a substantial obligation to analyse why that is so. If it is not possible to create a concerted response such as that which we have been commemorating over the past two or three days, we should ask ourselves as searchingly as we can what is the most effective response that we can offer.

I associate myself at the outset with the remarks of the right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell), who rightly said that to describe what has taken place in the former Yugoslavia as a civil war is a somewhat facile and self-serving description. It is a description most frequently applied by those who are of the school of thought that what takes place in the former Yugoslavia has nothing to do with us. I note with interest that, while that response

frequently occurs at Foreign Office or Defence Question Time, when looking around the House when we have the opportunity to debate the issues in detail one finds that that school of thought is very poorly represented, if at all.

The Foreign Secretary gave a most lucid account of precisely why what takes place in the former Yugoslavia is of interest to us. The school of thought to which I referred suggests that what happens there creates no obligations, and in particular no moral obligations, on the people of the United Kingdom.

Considered from the pragmatic point of view of the political, economic and military interests of the United Kingdom, a conflict at the very heart of Europe with the potential to spread to Kosovo or Macedonia, a conflict which might involve our allies in NATO and members or potential members of the European Union and which might result in a truculent Russia and a guilt-ridden United States drawn into increasing patronage of the combatants, there is no doubt whatsoever that we have a substantial interest in the area.

What of our moral responsibility? It has become unfashionable to refer to moral responsibility in the context of Yugoslavia, although in relation to operations in the Gulf, moral responsibility was a frequently discussed issue.

Membership of the Security Council of the United Nations carries with it not only rights but obligations. If those moral obligations are not always recognised by hon. Members, those who are so sceptical about them should pay a visit to the young men and women whom we have sent to Yugoslavia to assist the United Nations effort there.

In truth, if not all politicians in the House feel a moral obligation for what happens in the former Yugoslavia, almost without exception the armed services personnel to whom I have spoken on the three occasions when I have visited the former Yugoslavia feel a moral obligation to fulfil what they see as being useful and necessary work on behalf of the international community.

I therefore have no hesitation in asserting that there is a moral obligation, which the House should recognise and emphasise right now, to prevent ethnic cleansing in Europe so far as we can. We cannot do that alone. We can only do it through existing international institutions. The United Nations and NATO have been most directly involved in the operations in the former Yugoslavia. The United Nations has been much criticised.

One has to ask oneself what one expects when some of the resolutions from which the mandates are drawn are, to say the least, delphic; when in the beginning the political and military direction afforded to the United Nations forces was, to say the least, inadequate; when, on occasion, insufficient or inadequate military resources have been available to the United Nations; and when, as some of the contributions today have already acknowledged, there is a system of dual command in which assets such as aircraft are not under the overall command of the commander on the ground, which flies in the face of all the accepted canons of good military command and control.

**Dr. Norman A. Godman** (Greenock and Port Glasgow): The hon. and learned Gentleman has talked about an international moral responsibility and the laudable objectives of a unity of purpose and a concerted response, but is not the truth, however sad that may be, that the United Nations, as presently structured, simply does not have the wherewithal to pursue those laudable objectives?

**Mr. Campbell:** I agree with that general proposition. Perhaps on some other occasion we can discuss the important lessons to be learned from our experience in the former Yugoslavia.

I wish to return to a question which to some extent has already been explored. It concerns the request apparently made by Lieutenant-General Sir Rupert Smith during the weekend for the use of air strikes in response to the mortaring of Sarajevo, or a part of Sarajevo, which resulted in a number of dead and injured. That request was denied. The Secretary of State sought to lay out the position as he understood it, but I share with the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South a certain reservation about the extent to which the Secretary of State was able to satisfy us on the matter.

The whole sorry episode is perhaps illustrated by the quotation ascribed to a United Nations spokesman, who is widely reported as having said, "We will not do nothing." If that is the response of the United Nations to a gross and severe provocation, it is hardly surprising that the deterrent effect of threats made by the United Nations has been rather less forceful than many of us in the House would have preferred.

It is right to recognise that the United Nations effort can be only as good as its members make it. If we are to embark on such joint operations involving the United Nations and NATO, much clear thinking has to be done. There have to be clear political and military objectives and clear rules of engagement which both sides endorse. Above all, there have to be adequate resources, not just in terms of numbers but in terms of quality. What is the point in declaring a no-fly zone if it takes months to deploy the aircraft to enforce it? What is the point in authorising a naval blockade if it takes months to deploy the ships to enforce it? What is the point in declaring that certain areas are safe areas if there is neither the will nor the resources to protect them?

The question that must be in the minds of many hon. Members today is: if tomorrow Serbian forces set out to overrun one of the United Nations safe areas, what would the United Nations response be? Could there be circumstances in which the United Nations would stand back and allow such a safe area simply to be overrun?

People often contrast the success of the Gulf war with operations in Yugoslavia, but the parallel is wholly inept. Yugoslavia is what one might described colloquially as a blue-helmet operation in which the political direction and the ultimate military control is provided by the United Nations. The Gulf was notable for the fact that there was not a blue helmet in sight. Security Council resolutions authorised action and the allies took action. One is at least entitled to ask whether, if a similar arrangement had applied in the former Yugoslavia, circumstances might have been different.

We must also recognise that major operations on the part of the United Nations stand a chance of success only when the United States is engaged politically and militarily, and in this instance the unwillingness of the United States to put troops on the ground has been a major source of difficulty. We should recognise that the conflicting views on the issue of the arms embargo have weakened the perception of the allied effort. I heard

*[Mr. Campbell]*

Secretary of State Perry tell a group of people in Washington not so long ago that NATO is more important than Bosnia. That he felt it necessary to say it was an eloquent indication of the extent to which the differing views of how to deal with Bosnia have, from time to time, caused considerable difficulty in the alliance itself.

What then should our policy be? We must stay as long as the mandate can be implemented, without undue risk to those whom we have sent there. That judgment places heavy reliance on the commanders on the ground. It does not mean that there is no risk. We must accept—and we should be willing to take responsibility for accepting—that we are putting the lives of men and women from the United Kingdom at some risk. The events in Maglaj a few days ago are a clear and recent example of that.

There is no question but that we have done extremely well in the former Yugoslavia, not just in what we have achieved in facilitating the humanitarian effort—it is right that the aid organisations and the Overseas Development Administration should be properly recognised for the tremendous efforts that they have made both in the supply of material and in the provision of utilities—but in what we were able to broker in the federation between Bosnian Croats and what we should now rightly call the Bosnian Government side of the argument. That federation is occasionally precarious, but the fact that it is in existence at all and that it continues to hold is substantially due to the efforts of our British forces there.

We should also recognise what we have been able to deter. It is less easy to calculate, but in the context of what we are describing, it is extremely significant; it bears not only on the risks to our forces, but on the question of the willingness to implement our threats. Anywhere in the former Yugoslavia, members of our forces say with considerable authority that they believe that one of the reasons why they have—relatively—inflicted fewer casualties than others is that they have made it clear that any effort to engage British forces will be met with a resolute response and full use of the terms of engagement which allow for self-defence.

We must not withdraw from the former Yugoslavia unless we are compelled to do so. Once again, I notice absent from the debate some of those who, from time to time, blithely call for withdrawal. I am sorry that they are not here, because I would say to them that they should not talk about withdrawal until they have driven the road from Gorni Vakuf to Vitez and seen the physical circumstances that withdrawal would involve. Then and only then would they be in a better position to make a judgment about the desirability or otherwise of withdrawal.

Withdrawal would be difficult and dangerous. Estimates of what it would involve range from 40,000 to 50,000 additional troops and six weeks to several months. One thing is clear, as the Secretary of State for Defence acknowledged last week: there can be no question of the United Kingdom withdrawing its forces unilaterally.

Our policy has become one of containment. Indeed, we are accused of that by the Bosnian Government. It is right to say, however, that they are as much the architects of that policy as any others involved. So long as conflict seems more likely to bring rewards than does negotiation, containment is probably the only policy available to us.

We should not lift the arms embargo. The right hon. Member for Guildford made quite an eloquent case against those who have argued for the continuing imposition of the embargo, but the one issue on which he did not touch, to which the Secretary of State referred in opening the debate, is that a lifting of the arms embargo would make withdrawal inevitable. It would provoke an immediate response by Bosnian Serb forces to make use of their present advantages. Time would also elapse before any heavy weapons were delivered and before those to whom they were delivered were proficient in using them. The policy of lifting the arms embargo used to be described as "lift and strike". The more sagacious minds on Capitol Hill now describe it as "lift and pray".

The contact group is the best hope. Within its membership, some have a particular role to play in impressing on some of those involved in the conflict the need to reach an accommodation. I say unequivocally that a Germany which aspires to permanent membership of the UN Security Council has to demonstrate a capacity to influence Croatia. A Russia which wants to command special NATO recognition has to continue to press Mr. Milosevic to renounce the notion of a greater Serbia and give Bosnia-Herzegovina necessary recognition.

A United States which has embarrassed NATO over the arms embargo has to continue to press the Bosnian Government, especially to persuade them that there is no prospect of the international community entering the conflict on behalf of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Whether that would be right or wrong is neither here nor there: there is no political will for such action.

Towards the end of the speech of the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), who opened the debate on behalf of Her Majesty's Opposition, there was an interesting and thoughtful passage about other ways in which the conflict might be resolved. They are well worth exploring, but the fighting must stop before such interesting ideas stand any chance of implementation.

Nothing prepares one for the destruction that one sees in the former Yugoslavia. It is not the houses damaged by shell fire that affect one most, but those that have been burned out, not so that others can occupy them, but so that no one can occupy them. Such houses have in truth been cleansed by fire. Parts of the former Yugoslavia are a hellish place, but I have no doubt that what has occurred is nothing compared to what might have occurred but for the presence of the United Nations and the United Kingdom forces.

6.55 pm

**Mr. Michael Stern** (Bristol, North-West): I do not wish to follow directly the very eloquent speech of the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell), because I want to return to the topic of an area of the former Yugoslavia with which the hon. Member for Knowsley, South (Mr. O'Hara) dealt. In commenting on the potential military and economic conflict taking place in and around the Republic of Macedonia, the hon. Gentleman forcefully put what might be called the Greek case. I do not wish to go into a detailed, line-by-line contradiction of everything he said, but in putting a slightly different point of view, I should merely like to echo the comment that I made in an intervention on my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Sir P. Cormack).

When an economic aggressor tries to justify the theft of a national name and a national symbol by saying that peaceful actions inevitably lead to greater aggression by another nation, I wonder whether I am alone in hearing echoes of conflicts the end of which we were celebrating earlier this week. I wonder if I am alone in thinking that a nation—Greece—which is forced to use such phrases to justify its views and actions is guilty of at least some moral fudging.

I make no apology for referring again to Macedonia, because, as the hon. Member for Knowsley, South rightly said—in perhaps the one part of his speech with which I agree—it is a potential flashpoint, despite being part of the former Yugoslavia where, so far, conflict has not developed to any very significant extent internally, along the lines of ethnic mix. That part of the former Yugoslavia made the transition to independence without significant bloodshed.

In an Adjournment debate on 30 November 1992, I called on the Government to support Macedonia's efforts to achieve recognition and I received a ready response from the Minister of State. I said that it was the one part of the former Yugoslavia that was able to negotiate the removal of the Yugoslav army without bloodshed. Despite that, it remains a centre for potential conflict, for reasons that are partly internal and partly external.

The hon. Member for Knowsley, South detailed the conflict with Greece, which constitutes the external reason for Macedonia remaining a potential flashpoint. The conflict can be described from the Macedonian side only as economic aggression by Greece. Nobody forced Greece to impose economic sanctions on Serbia, which are creating serious economic problems in Macedonia. That small country relied on the export of its produce to provide some sort of living for its relatively small number of inhabitants. It now has to use an extremely long land route through Bulgaria for its exports because the natural route through the territory of its so-called peaceful neighbour is barred to it. That cannot be the way to avoid conflict.

The ethnic mix in Macedonia is another reason for potential conflict. Sensibly, and with considerable international help, the Macedonians, unlike the people in any other republic of the former Yugoslavia, have gone so far as to try to establish the boundaries of this ethnic mix. This was achieved in a recent census, which has generally been accepted as accurate by most observer nations and which led to a focus on certain problems.

For example, the Albanian minority in Macedonia, which previously believed itself to be rather larger, is barred from its traditional sources of higher education in Kosovo. It looks to the Macedonian Government to provide the ethnic higher education that was a traditional right of Albanian populations in adjoining countries. However, it has not so far been satisfied on what many people, especially those from minority communities, regard as a legitimate demand.

I am not trying to minimise the problems in Macedonia or to say that they have all been solved by the Macedonian Government, but any solution cannot but be made infinitely more difficult by the imposition of economic sanctions by a country to which we are allied. There is no reason for those sanctions, at least none that is accepted by any Macedonian.

**Mr. O'Hara:** Does not the hon. Gentleman accept that the imposition of the partial humanitarian and trade blockade by Greece is the only peaceful means that it has to draw the attention of other countries to its dispute with the former Yugoslavian republic of Macedonia? Does not he further accept the judgment by the Advocate General of the European Court of Justice that Greece is entitled, despite the plea by the European Commission, to impose the blockade under article 224 of the treaty of union because the tension between the two countries constitutes a threat of war? Does he accept—

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes):** Order. The hon. Gentleman's intervention is too long. He is starting to make a speech.

**Mr. Stern:** Doubtful court decision or not, the Greek Government's unilateral action in imposing economic sanctions on Macedonia is leading directly to additional poverty and starvation, and that cannot be accepted by any civilised nation.

Macedonia's economy was fragile before the Greek action, and it is far more fragile now. That means human suffering, which western nations have taken some action to try to alleviate. A systemic transformation facility of the World bank was opened in 1993 and expired in 1994. Such facilities are intended to lead to a full IMF programme of assistance for nations suffering from economic deprivation or aggression. Has that facility been renewed, or are negotiations being held aimed at renewing it? I trust that, if there are such negotiations, the Government are playing their full part in them. Perhaps, if the Minister cannot answer that at the end of the debate, he will write to me about it.

I undertook to be brief and not to reply in detail to the many doubtful points made by the hon. Member for Knowsley, South. I shall conclude by focusing briefly on the undoubted problems in the area. We cannot prevent conflict either by attacking the economic stability of any part of the former Yugoslavia or by condoning economic aggression by any of our allies. The Government have gained many friends in Macedonia for their robust attitude to Greek actions in the past; I hope that they will maintain that attitude.

7.7 pm

**Mr. Robert N. Wareing** (Liverpool, West Derby): Some hon. Members have said that Yugoslavia used to have a multi-ethnic population. We are being asked to support the integrity of Bosnia-Herzegovina on the ground that the Muslim-dominated Government in Sarajevo wish it to continue. In December 1991, Britain and other countries, under pressure from Mr. Genscher, decided to turn their backs on the territorial integrity of the former Yugoslavia. If we had been interested in retaining a multi-ethnic country in south-eastern Europe we should have defended the former Yugoslavia at that time.

In October 1990, I told the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office of the dangers on the horizon in that part of the world. In reply to a letter from me in April 1991, the Prime Minister said that he agreed that the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia should be maintained. We now know that, some eight months later, the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary abandoned that position. We must ask what had changed in the interim. Frankly, I do not think anything had changed in south-east Europe to make them conclude that we needed to recognise the independence of Slovenia and Croatia, far less to encourage the population of Bosnia to hold a referendum on leaving the former Yugoslavia.

*[Mr. Robert N. Wareing]*

The only thing that changed the Government's mind—this was and, to large extent, remains my only criticism of Government policy on the issue—was their succumbing to German pressure because of the need for a quid pro quo on the social chapter of the Maastricht treaty. Following that, folly has led to folly, which has brought us to the present position.

**Mr. Macdonald:** My hon. Friend said that, in December 1991, the Government, when they should have been defending the principle of a multi-ethnic Yugoslavia, recognised the independence of Croatia. Does he acknowledge that, in December 1991, the war in Croatia had been going on for only six months, ethnic cleansing had already taken place and the city of Vukovar was a pile of rubble? Were not the activities of the Serbian and Yugoslav army in Croatia precisely what led to the breakdown?

**Mr. Wareing:** I refer my hon. Friend to the speech that I made in the House on 1 November, which appeared in columns 150-153 of the *Official Report*, when I was the first person to mention the names Arkan and Seselj. I was the first person in the House to say who the real war criminals were, who led the irregulars in eastern Slavonia and other parts of Croatia. I assure my hon. Friend, therefore, that I am fully aware that war and ethnic cleansing were occurring, but it was not all one way.

At the time, I was highly critical of the actions of the Jugoslav national army—I criticised the bombardment of Dubrovnik—but it is a pity that people with an anti-Serb attitude are never prepared to criticise the Croats or Muslims when they endanger the peace and break ceasefire after ceasefire, as Muslim forces have in recent times, breaking out of the so-called safe havens and expecting no retaliation from Bosnian-Serb forces. I have been critical of all of them. What I liked about the Government's policy, until they recognised Croatia, was its even-handed approach, and in that speech on 1 November 1991, I said so.

The Government took no notice of the Badinter report or of Lord Carrington's view that Slovenia and Croatia in particular did not matter. The Badinter report suggested that Slovenia fulfilled all the necessary conditions for recognition as an independent democratic state, but the same could not have been said about Croatia. When we viewed the position at that time, we should have remembered that one third of the Serb population of the former Yugoslavia lived outside Serbia. It was they who were being ethnically cleansed in Zagreb and Krajina. The largest section of the Serb population in Croatia lived in the city of Zagreb and it was they who first suffered from ethnic cleansing.

In September 1991—remember the date—Croat forces, who may have been irregulars but they were certainly Croats, went into Bosanski Brod, which is located in north Bosnia. At that time, Bosnia was recognised by the international community, including Britain, as a part of the Federal Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia. What did they do in Bosanski Brod? They massacred an entire community.

I will never forget where I stood on 2 May 1993. It was on the edge of a mass grave. I had already seen the bodies of 42 men, women and children who had been massacred by Croat forces in that part of the world before it was liberated by Serb forces. I saw two people's bodies being discovered. One was a woman. I knew it was a woman only because she had worn a blue skirt with white spots. The stench was indescribable; I felt like a British soldier arriving at Belsen. Those Serbs had been massacred by Croat forces, who had come from just across the River Sava from Slavonski Brod in Croatia.

When I and my colleagues—hon. Members on both sides of the House—arrived in Belgrade that night, we contacted the media, who were totally indifferent to what had happened at Bosanski Brod. It was easy to get there—we had done so, and had seen and smelt the bodies. We were literally sick at what we had seen, but the media did not want to know. I am sure that they will suppress most of what I have to say in the House tonight. Our reports did not fit in with their angle or line, so they did not print them. They could have taken photographs, as I did, and seen what had happened.

In Derventa and Bosanski Brod, there was Ustashi graffiti on the walls, and it was clear that, by any stretch of the imagination, Franjo Tudjman's adherents were not all pure democrats. In "The Wastelands of Historic Reality", published by Tudjman in 1989, he pours doubt on the extent of the holocaust and especially on what had happened to Serbs, Jews and gipsies at Jasenovac concentration camp, the biggest such camp in the Balkans. Ironically, on VE day it was taken by Croat forces in their recent aggression—if we are going to use that word, let us use it in every case—against the Serb population in western Slavonia, who have had roots in the region for centuries.

**Mr. Gapes:** My hon. Friend mentioned Jasenovac camp and the book by the President Tudjman. I hope that he will confirm that the book, as I understand it, includes an allegation that the Jewish people in Yugoslavia were in charge of their own extermination in that concentration camp, and that it forms part of an anti-semitic tinge to President Tudjman, which our Government seem to have ignored in the past few years. They were prepared to invite Tudjman here—a man who admired the fascist Pavelic Government—but they did not invite anyone representing the partisans of Yugoslavia who defeated Hitler and his armies.

**Mr. Wareing:** That is true. In his book, Tudjman refers to Jewish guards being in control of the situation in Jasenovac.

Much more can be said about the record of the extremists in Croatia. *Le Figaro* has reported that fascist insignia are blossoming in Tudjman's Croatia and in Herzegovina. It says that in Herzegovina, on the road from Mostar to Sarajevo, some Croat volunteers proudly showed the swastika as a symbol on their uniform, and some were wearing Wehrmacht helmets painted in black.

I consider it outrageous that not only Tudjman but his vice-president were invited to the celebrations here in London. They were not invited to other capitals. Indeed, the Israeli President refused to meet the Croatian President recently, when his country's delegation opened the memorial museum of the holocaust in Israel. According to the *New York Times*, the invitation to Tudjman to attend the opening of the holocaust museum was an insult to 6 million dead Jews. It certainly was.

My hon. Friend the Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) said earlier that Tudjman had fought against the Nazis. It is true that he was a colonel in the partisan army. Is it not rather ironic that no representatives of the successors of that partisan army were invited to the celebrations last week? The Prime Minister would have been better advised to invite no one from the former Yugoslavia than to invite someone who is defensive on the question of Nazi genocide.

In 1944, Hitler made an offer. He said to the Croats, "We will free 1 million Jews in exchange for 10,000 trucks." In his book, Tudjman describes Hitler's offer as incredibly favourable. What was the alternative? The alternative was the gas chamber; but Tudjman saw fit to refer to an "incredibly favourable" offer.

The Ustashi leader, Mile Budak, who was executed after the war for his quisling activities, is now recognised in Croatia. Schools are named after him; a commune in Zagreb is called after him, as are streets, squares and other public institutions. He was recently described as a martyr and a Nobel prize nominee in the 1930s—but he was, in fact, the ideologue of the Pavelic state set up by Hitler in 1941.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Gapes) pointed out the other day, in a private notice question, that one Dinko Sakic—the last commander of the Jasenovac concentration camp—had seen fit to return from exile in Australia. This war criminal, who was never brought to trial, has returned to Croatia, and has said—according to a Dalmatian periodical—

"I am proud to have been an Ustashi."

In the Zagreb journal Magazin, to which my hon. Friend referred, he said:

"I am proud of all I did. If I were offered the same duty today, I would accept it."

Those are the people with whom, unfortunately, we found our Ministers associating during the VE day celebrations—celebrations of the defeat in Europe of fascism, which had caused the deaths of many millions of people in the second world war, including our own people.

We have had evidence of the desecration of the Jasanovac memorial complex. No action is taken by Tudjman to thwart the activities of his fascists. Those fascist tendencies have been noted not only by *Le Figaro*, but recently in articles quoted by Deutsche Welle in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. The German Government, with Mr. Kohl and Mr. Genscher representing the foreign office, may have encouraged the creation of Croatia, but I am sure that they are having second thoughts.

I think that it would be well worth while for representatives of our Government to have words with the former burgermeister of Bremen, who is currently representing the European Union in Mostar: I am sure that he would have something to say about the activities of Croatian forces in that part of the world. The invitation to Tudjman was the wrong message to give.

I have mentioned the media. I observed them to be at fault not only in Bosanski Brod; when I went to Gorazde on 2 September 1993, when all was peace and quiet, I heard the BBC World Service tell the people of Britain and the world that it was coming under heavy shellfire. The UN commander there—the Muslim commander there—was able to tell me that no shells had been fired on Gorazde for six days.

I believe that General Sir Michael Rose—whom I was proud and privileged to meet only two weeks ago—performed a wonderful task in very difficult circumstances. He had to face abuse from Saladzic, and from people who should really thank the British forces and UNPROFOR for getting so much aid to Sarajevo and other parts of the world.

We hear people who know nothing—such as Madeleine Albright, the United States ambassador to the United Nations—call for air strikes against Serbs who are bombarding Sarajevo. No one excuses that action, but what is the reaction when Bosnian Muslim forces use the "safety" of the safe haven to launch their attacks and break ceasefires in Tuzla, Sarajevo and other parts of Bosnia? What is the reaction of Madeleine Albright—or the United States ambassador in Zagreb, Mr. Galbraith—to the outbreak of conflict in western Slavonia? When the Croat forces were launched on that area, Mr. Galbraith's reaction was only to criticise the retaliation on Zagreb.

As far as we are concerned, none of that is justifiable or moral, but we must have an even-handed approach. We must recognise that, if there is to be a solution to the problems of the former Yugoslavia—if the rights of all ethnic minorities are once more to be recognised—we ourselves must recognise that the Serbs too have rights. We hear talk of the dangers of a greater Serbia. There is nothing wrong with people of one nationality wanting to live together in the same country.

The Germans did that. I applauded with everyone else when the Berlin wall was breached. I remember standing under the Brandenburg gate at the start of the new year in 1990, and rejoicing with the crowd that Germany was united again. The new Germans have grown up, as in West Germany, in a spirit of democracy. We should have nothing to fear from a united Germany. If it is good for the Germans to be united, why is it wrong for Serbs?

Government policy should sometimes include the word "no". I remember the former Prime Minister saying "No, no, no." We should say no to those people who need to be reconciled to the present situation in Croatia and who want that country to be treated as if it were a western democracy—which it is not. We should have said no in December 1991. We should be prepared now to put the utmost pressure on the Croatian Government to liberalise and to democratise themselves.

If it was possible for Mr. Gorbachev to play a role in bringing about democracy in Hungary, Romania, Poland and the Czech and Slovak republics, it should not beyond our wits to bring such pressure to bear on Croatia, so that she can rightfully take her place as a truly democratic and fair country.

7.31 pm

**Mr. Peter Viggers** (Gosport): I have had the opportunity to discuss this subject several times with the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing), so I know how well briefed he is and how sincerely he feels. It was good to hear him speak this evening.

In approaching this debate, two quotations persisted in my mind. One derives from a wonderful service in Winchester cathedral on Sunday, when the choir sang:

"And they shall beat their swords into ploughshares
And their spears into pruning hooks.
Nation shall not lift up sword against nation;
Neither shall they learn war any more."

*[Mr. Peter Viggers]*

Feeling that rather undersold the value of our armed forces, I checked the biblical source and discovered that the words

"Neither shall they learn war any more"

was a reference to a vision of Isiah, not a prediction. I fear that it will remain a vision, for it is no more realistic now than it was then. We need our armed forces, and they are making a massive contribution in the former Yugoslavia.

The second quotation that stuck in my mind comes from the wonderful book "Eastern Approaches", by Fitzroy Maclean. I recommend those hon. Members who have not read it to do so, and I recommend to those hon. Members who have read that book to re-read it, because it is highly relevant now.

Fitzroy Maclean writes about telling Churchill how worried he was that, if Tito were to be aided to power in Yugoslavia, that would lead to a communist state having special links with the Soviet Union, which might be bad for the United Kingdom's broader interests:

"The Prime Minister's reply resolved my doubts.

'Do you intend,' he asked, 'to make Jugoslavia your home after the war?'

'No, sir,' I replied.

'Neither do I,' he said. 'And, that being so, the less you and I worry about the form of government they set up, the better. That is for them to decide'."

I am not sure how far the House can go in deciding the form of government that Yugoslavia should have, or even in distinguishing the different factions. I use that word advisedly, despite the remarks by my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Sir P. Cormack). Although there is no doubt that the Bosnian Serbs have been the main aggressors, there has been enormous fault on all sides. The Bosnian Serbs have the arms of the former republic of Yugoslavia and therefore the military advantage—but there have been atrocities on all sides, as anyone who has visited that sad country knows.

The United Nations' response has been to deploy troops, initially to help to ensure the distribution of humanitarian and medical aid, and to assist the promotion of peace. However, there has been a dichotomy throughout our presence in the former Yugoslavia. The UN's emphasis has been on keeping or promoting the peace whereas NATO, entrusted with the military role, has as its theme the mass application of force, manoeuvre and the destruction of the enemy within a limited time frame.

Over the past three years, our position has continued to be ambiguous, in trying to maintain a peace that does not exist and seeking to impose a peace that does not exist. A couple of years ago, I had the opportunity to ask the Supreme Allied Commander Europe how many soldiers he thought he would realistically need to impose peace in the former Yugoslavia. Being an American, he replied, "Peter, I would need one soldier to sit on the head of every male Bosnian." Hon. Members can work out the numbers for themselves.

Peace enforcement would require massive military force. Peacekeeping, which does not exist, requires less. We have the major problem of seeking to enforce a peace that does not exist. The Ministry of Defence manual on wider peacekeeping states:

"A level of consent is crucial for the success of a peace operation."

As a contributor to United Nations forces, we must maintain impartiality. However, we also need credibility. If we lay down a rule that is then flouted, we will lose our credibility.

There is an inevitable imbalance between impartiality and credibility. There is a quantitive dimension to that dichotomy, as well as a time frame. From a quantitive point of view, an isolated act of aggression—one shell or a series of shells fired into a safe haven—can be met with a sharp response by the UN through NATO. If there is a continual and deliberate military barrage over a period, and if the UN responded in strength over that period, the risk of that response being perceived as impartial among the three sides would be diminished. The larger the time frame within which that response continued, and the more sustained that it is, the more we would apparently lose impartiality.

Furthermore, none of the three sides has all its forces completely under control. They do not all come completely under the control of the three groups. There are warring factions, and a brigand element.

I spoke of the UN's role in humanitarian aid and peace promotion. The latter role has increased and more of it has been nailed to the UN soldier's job description. There were air strikes in 1993 and 1994, and after the Seville meeting, United States Secretary of State Perry said that such strikes would be more decisively made and widespread in the event of Serb aggression or intransigence. Air strikes have the purpose of protecting UN forces and maintaining safe havens created under Security Council resolution 836. Wider air strikes could also have the purpose of destroying the combat capacity of one of the forces.

As to the first, UN forces are lightly armed and have no tanks or heavy artillery, which is important. Possibly of more significance is that UN forces are deployed to assist in the completion of the roles with which they have been tasked. They are not deployed in a way that enables them to engage in military operations against any of the three sides. The reverse is true. They are integrated in the community and are sitting targets in the event of a breakdown of peace, if they become involved in the conflict. It has been possible to deploy our troops in the manner in which they have been deployed only because it is now possible, with the support of good military technology, for forces on the ground to call up air strikes at short notice to assist them. However, the troops on the ground cannot prevent violence

Several hon. Members have implied or specifically stated that, by maintaining forces in the former Yugoslavia, we are able to prevent the spread of conflict, but it does not work that way. Troops were heavily deployed in Gorni Vakuf and the war raged around and through that town. Troops were deployed in Vitez and between the two periods that we were there, a year ago and in March, civil war raged between Muslim and the Croats. Similarly, the terrible events of Novi Travnik took place despite the presence of United Nations forces nearby.

If our aim is to stop the war by force, we will need to deploy our troops elsewhere in the former Yugoslavia and with different weapons. We cannot get to where we would need to be to stop the war from where we are now because our troops are in the wrong position to stop the war and have the wrong equipment. If we decide that it is our role to separate the combatants, we will need to start from somewhere else. We cannot get to a peace enforcement role from our current position. We would need to withdraw and redeploy with different weapons.

I understand the frustration that is rightly felt in the United States at having armed forces that cannot act to stop the war located in the former Yugoslavia. However, the truth is that they cannot stop it, because they do not have the necessary weapons or numbers of troops and they are deployed in the wrong place.

In the past year, there has been a federation of Muslims and Croats, which seemed to be very promising. When I and other members of the Select Committee on Defence were in the former Yugoslavia a year or so ago, we thought that there was a confluence of various factors that seemed to be quite promising.

First, after the horrific bomb that killed 68 people in a Sarajevo market in February, there was revulsion throughout the world and a feeling that something must be done. That led to a strengthening of attitudes, at least in the short term.

Secondly, the Muslim-Croat federation seemed to offer hope. The fact that two of the three sides were no longer fighting each other offered hope of further peace. In addition, rather more than a year ago, there seemed to be a war-weariness on all sides.

The final factor was the courage and determination of United Nations troops and, exceptionally, of British forces, which are widely regarded as being quite outstanding, inspired by the truly remarkable leadership of General Sir Michael Rose. Those factors came together rather more than a year ago. It seemed that peace had a chance; a remote one, but one that needed to be taken.

Now things look quite bleak. The Croats have taken advantage of no longer being in conflict with the Muslims and we have seen a pre-emptive strike by the Croats. The Muslims have taken the chance over the past year, especially during the four months of the ceasefire, to re-equip and rearm. I am told that they are now extremely well equipped and armed. They have all the arms that they need other than heavy equipment such as heavy artillery and tanks. They are well equipped for fighting in mountainous terrain.

Where do we go from there? If military skill and courage could find a solution to the problem, it would have been sorted out some time ago, but they are not enough. The troops have been given tasks that are not achievable, and they must not be given further such tasks in future. Tasks that are militarily unachievable should be phased out.

The expression "safe havens" carries with it a message of hope, but if that message is not backed up with military force, a safe haven is not safe, merely a pious hope. It would take much greater force than is deployed at present—I believe an unacceptably greater force—to prevent war in the safe havens. To make the safe havens completely militarily safe is not a realistic objective.

I regretfully welcome the decision that the Royal Welch Fusiliers should not be replaced when they leave Gorazde in September. The military situation in which they have been put is almost impossible.

We in the United Kingdom should not be sucked further into the Bosnian quagmire. We must resist those people, whose background is normally political rather than military, who say that we should extend air strikes. If the United Nations is perceived as partial, it will forfeit its current status as a promoter of peace.

I conclude that we must hunker down and phase out where we can. This year's statement on defence estimates—the White Paper—says that the

"safety and security of British troops in Bosnia remains of paramount importance to the British Government."

Our troops are in positions of enormous risk and I know that the French, who have tragically lost 35 soldiers against our sad loss of 13, will certainly be considering withdrawal over the next few weeks. Those losses are a major factor in French thinking.

But how do we get the troops out, if that is the decision that is taken? There was a NATO plan that, apparently, involved some 80,000 troops over six months. The latest figure that I have heard suggest that some 40,000 troops might be involved.

The last thing that commanders on the ground need is more armour. The problem is withdrawing along a narrow mountain road—and only one road is available in the north of the British deployment area. We certainly need helicopters, but we do not need armour. To send more troops would compound the problem.

The British people and others will need to face the serious issues that will be involved if we decide to withdraw. What will happen if women and children try to block the road of withdrawal? My view is clear: we would have to face down such a threat and not yield to it. We could not be blackmailed in that way, and I invite the House to consider what would be the implication of not being blackmailed in that way. We would need to back our troops in a difficult situation, which could be bloody. They deserve our complete support. The United Nations contribution has been worthy, even noble, and United Nations troops must not be put at risk by being held up in such a way.

In conclusion, I shall deal with the credibility of the United Nations and NATO. It is often said that we cannot withdraw, because it would mean failure, a loss of face and credibility for the United Nations and NATO. However, they will not retain credibility by compounding an error. The United Nations and NATO have done their best. It is a good best but, at the end of the day, we cannot stop people fighting if that is what they are determined to do.

7.48 pm

**Mr. Calum Macdonald** (Western Isles): I shall follow the good example of the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Sir P. Cormack), who tried, in his excellent speech, to scotch some received myths about the situation in the former Yugoslavia.

In doing so, I fear that I will disagree with a couple of my hon. Friends. They will not be surprised by that, and I should say that I respect both their knowledge of the former Yugoslavia and their knowledge of foreign policy issues in general. In particular, I respect the genuine affection of my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) for the old state of Yugoslavia, which has led him to the analysis that he brings to these debates. I believe that that analysis is profoundly mistaken.

I shall take up first the myth that is often put about that early recognition of Croatia, prompted by the German Government, led to war in the former Yugoslavia. That interpretation flies in the face of the facts. Croatia was recognised in January 1992. By that time the war had been going on in Croatia for a full six months. Vukovar was a flattened mess, Dubrovnik had already been shelled and ethnic cleansing had already taken place. An end to the war in Croatia came within a couple of weeks of its being recognised. Therefore, I do not understand how it can be said—it often is—that recognition led to the war or brought about a worsening of it.

*[Mr. Calum Macdonald]*

My hon. Friend the Members for West Derby and for Ilford, South (Mr. Gapes) mentioned the role of President Tudjman and the Croatian Government in this whole mess. Obviously, no Opposition Member can feel very much political sympathy for the politics of President Tudjman. He is a right-wing nationalist with an authoritarian personality, if not authoritarian tendencies, and he has undeniably expressed anti-semitic sentiments.

My hon. Friends are sadly mistaken if they think that President Tudjman's shortcomings could possibly justify the campaign of ethnic cleansing and territorial aggression by the Jugoslav national army or the nationalist Serbs in Croatia in 1991. I must point out to my hon. Friends that, sadly, eastern Europe today is full of right-wing nationalist politicians and leaders, and I am sure that some of them harbour all sorts of unpleasant prejudices. As I have said, those shortcomings could not in any way justify the policies pursued by the Serbian regime in Belgrade since 1991.

**Mr. Wareing:** Does not my hon. Friend see that, because of the way in which the Serbs were being treated inside the newly declared independent state of Croatia, the Serbs who lived in Bosnia, with their memories of what happened during the years 1941-45, were realistically worried about what would happen in a state that might be absorbed by Croatia? There was no doubt that the Croatian regular army was active in Bosnia, certainly in Herzegovina, in the early days of the war there. The Serbs were frightened of being part of a Bosnia that would come under the influence of President Tudjman.

**Mr. Macdonald:** Before I say anything about the activities of the Croatian army and the Croatian irregulars in Bosnia, I must tell my hon. Friend that the policies of the Tudjman Government in the early and middle part of 1991, insensitive and heavy-handed though they may have been, are nothing like the authoritarian repression that the Serbian Government had been practising since the mid-1980s in places such as Kosovo. Just as I would say that that sort of authoritarian repression would not justify a reaction by the people of Kosovo to the extent of ethnic cleansing and other atrocities, so I say that the far less authoritarian style of the Croatian Government in 1991 could not in any way be used to justify what the nationalist Serbs and the Jugoslav national army have done in Croatia.

I must point out to my hon. Friends that that pattern is not unfamiliar in eastern Europe, where populations are being separated by the creation of new countries, notably in the Baltic states. Sometimes there is insensitive treatment of those populations. For example, some Russians have found themselves marooned in the newly independent states. However, that could not justify a policy by the Russian Government against the Ukraine, the Crimea or the Baltic states that parallelled the policies carried out in Croatia and Bosnia. It is not right to try to claim justification for what the nationalist Serbs have done in the former Yugoslavia on the shortcomings of the Croatian regime in particular.

I acknowledge that atrocities have been committed by all sides. I acknowledge particularly that there have been atrocities committed by Croatian irregulars in Herzegovina. However, there is a clear difference between isolated atrocities and the sort of systematic campaign of ethnic cleansing and terror carried out by nationalist Serbs and the Jugoslav national army in Croatia and Bosnia.

That difference has been recognised not just by myself or by journalists but by the investigators from the United Nations who have studied in close detail exactly what happened in all those countries. The head of the UN investigation team, Cherif Bassiouni, made it clear just a couple of months ago that that team's investigations estimated that 90 per cent. of the atrocities had been committed by Serbian forces, and that there was evidence of a systematic and planned campaign to remove wholesale populations from the areas that the nationalist Serbs wished to take over. Those points must be made firmly.

I should like to express my appreciation to those individuals and organisations who helped me on my most recent visit to the former Yugoslavia. During the Easter recess I took the opportunity to go to central Bosnia. I visited Zenica, Mostar and Tuzla. Although I did not accompany UNPROFOR, I saw evidence of the good work that it is doing and of the necessity of its remaining in that region. I also talked to people who work with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and saw evidence of their work. I was impressed by the good work that they were doing.

I also saw evidence of the work of British non-governmental organisations such as Oxford Aid, which is carrying out good work in Mostar helping to resupply a new hospital unit. I must say a special word about those working for the Overseas Development Administration in Bosnia, in Zenica and Tuzla. I saw the immensely valuable work that they were carrying out. They are enormously dedicated people, and I hope that the Government will continue to support and finance the work of the ODA in that area.

It is interesting that many of the people working for the ODA—for example, those driving the lorries in convoys in Zenica—are ex-service men who had previously served in Bosnia with the British Army through UNPROFOR. They were so convinced of the good work that they were doing that, even after being demobbed, they wished to return to continue that work in a civilian guise. That is an eloquent testimony of what has already been said tonight about the high level of morale and commitment among the British forces in the former Yugoslavia.

I compliment my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) on an excellent speech, which I hope will be noted by those who take an interest in the issue. He did not engage in inflated rhetoric of the kind that the Foreign Secretary and the Secretary of State for Defence often warn us of, nor did he advocate imposing a political solution by force. He did not even say that we needed new policies as such, and his central message was that the policies that we had needed to be implemented and enforced. He said that we needed consistency, resolution and determination in the prosecution of the existing policies, and that that would begin to bring about radical change in former Yugoslavia.

My hon. Friend also rightly warned us away from the endless fixation with maps, and with drawing lines and dividing up territories in former Yugoslavia. That is particularly correct with regard to the contact group plan, the latest of the peace plans to be advanced. The key issue in the plan is not the internal division of territory, with 49 per cent. going to one side and 51 per cent. to the other. The argument is not whether those figures should be adjusted by one or two percentage points.

The crucial matter is the survival of Bosnia-Herzegovina as an independent sovereign state within its pre-war borders, with a full, independent and recognised

international personality. That goal has been repeatedly stated in international declarations and European Community statements, and also by the Government. That goal is clearly insisted upon by the UN Security Council, most notably in resolutions 820 and 836.

UN resolution 836 reaffirmed the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of the republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the responsibility of the Security Council in that regard. The resolution went on to reaffirm that any taking of territory by force or any practice of ethnic cleansing was lawful and totally unacceptable. I emphasise that particular aspect of the contact group plan, because I feel that the Government are very much resiling from it.

I fear that the Foreign Office is beginning to fudge this key issue. At the beginning of this year, I corresponded with the Minister of State, who has now taken his place on the Front Bench. In a letter to me dated 3 January 1995, the Minister said that any settlement would need to be agreed by all parties and preserve the integrity of Bosnia-Herzegovina within its existing borders. That is something with which we could all agree.

The Minister went on to say that the arrangements would have to include some relationship between the Bosnian Serbs and Serbia for them to be acceptable to the Bosnian Serbs. That too is something which would be agreed on both sides of the House. But the Minister went on to say that the demand that the Bosnian Serbs must join the Croat and Muslim federation before they can have a relationship with Serbia was not a realistic basis for negotiations, and would not contribute to securing a peaceful settlement.

The Minister of State appeared to say that it is not a requirement of the contact group plan or of a plan for a peaceful settlement that the nationalist Bosnian Serbia should be required to join the federation that had been established between the Bosnian Government and the Croat representatives. I found that a puzzling statement, as it seems to me that real and recognised states come in only three forms. One can have a confederation, a federation or a unitary state. The Minister appears to be suggesting that what is projected for Bosnia-Herzegovina would not fit any of those three forms.

If that were true, I fear that Bosnia-Herzegovina would not be a fully independent sovereign state in the sense demanded by the UN Security Council resolutions. That was previously thought to be the goal of the Government's policy. That is why I was particularly alarmed when the Foreign Secretary said that what he envisaged for Bosnia-Herzegovina was a "loose union" between the Muslim and Croat federation and the Bosnian Serb territories. I tried to intervene at that point, but the Foreign Secretary declined.

That does not fit the goal which was widely believed to underpin previous UN Security Council resolutions. It does not fit the goal of re-establishing and recognising Bosnia-Herzegovina as a fully independent and sovereign entity. More importantly, it does not fit the goal of the Government of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The British Government and the Minister of State are deluding themselves if they think that a "loose union" of that kind will be acceptable to the Government of Bosnia-Herzegovina or will lead to a lasting settlement. The Secretary of State for Defence will reply to this debate and not the Minister of State, but that point must be clarified in the near future.

One of the most important factors in the approach of the Foreign Office and the Government is that it simply ignores the existence of vast numbers of Serbs living within Bosnian Government territories at the moment. The hon. Member for Staffordshire, South pointed out that some 150,000, or perhaps 200,000, Serbs live within Bosnian Government territories. It is important to note that Dr. Karadzic rules over what is probably a minority of the pre-war Serb population. Large numbers of Serbs still live within Bosnian Government territories, while large numbers fled abroad or to other parts of former Yugoslavia.

It is vital that the Government begin to address the existence of these pro-Bosnian Government Serbs, who have now formed themselves into a Serb civic council which has held meetings in Belgrade, Montenegro and Sarajevo. It is crucial that the voices of those Serbs—the sane Serbs—who want to see a democratic and plural community and Government in Bosnia are listened to. They should be given equal status to Dr. Karadzic's representatives in any future international discussions about the contact group plan.

It is notable that much the same happened in the areas of Croatia that were taken over by the nationalist Serbs. Not only were the Croat and other non-Serb populations in those areas cleansed, but large numbers of Serbs fled from them because they did not want to be ruled by such extreme nationalists. It is estimated that, of the 500,000 people living in the UN-protected areas in Croatia before the war began, fewer than 200,000 are left. The majority have gone—they have been cleaned out or have left, so we should be wary about thinking that the people who rule those depleted and depopulated areas command a mandate or popular support.

The main point is that we need, not new policies as such but a firm attachment to and the delivery of existing policies, as my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston said. In particular, we should give the Muslim-Croat federation much greater support. It has problems—notably, the fact that the population of Bosnia cannot merely be divided into Muslims or Croats as there are also people who do not think of themselves in such sectarian terms and they have to be found a place in the federation. Nevertheless, it has re-established relationships between groups that were fighting, and the Government should therefore fully support its success. That is not happening.

During my visit to Mostar, I found it striking that we are re-committing on a smaller scale the errors that we have committed throughout Bosnia on a large scale. The city has nominally been placed under a European Union administration and an EU administrator, whose deputy is a former commander of the Royal Marines. Legally, they have the right to issue decrees and laws, but they have no power to enforce them. They have 150 police, seconded from European Community countries, but they are simply there as advisers and have no role in enforcing the laws and edicts put out by the new administration. There is a huge gap between rhetoric and action in Mostar, which reflects the huge gap between rhetoric and action in Bosnia as a whole.

Secondly, the Government should provide full political support and ensure proper funding for the war crimes tribunal in The Hague. Justice Goldstone is to be admired for the courageous and systematic way in which he has tackled his task, and he should get full, explicit, open and voluble support from the British Government.

*[Mr. Macdonald]*

Thirdly, we want robust implementation of the UN mandates that already exist to supply humanitarian aid and protect the safe areas. As has been said, UNPROFOR is not there as a peacekeeping force—there is no peace to keep—but it has a mandate to deliver humanitarian aid and protect the safe areas. It does not require massive intervention to implement that mandate. It does not require 150,000 or 200,000 troops, or the absurd, massive numbers of which the Prime Minister sometimes talks. It does not mean that we fight someone else's war and it does not require any new resolutions. It simply means implementing what we have been saying that we would do for the past three years. From the events of this weekend, when four people were killed in Tuzla and eight in Sarajevo, it is clear that we are still not implementing those humanitarian and safe area mandates, and that has to be done.

The policies that I have suggested are limited, modest and eminently achievable. They require not a change of foreign policy but merely its honest implementation. If that were done, the balance of the conflict would quickly turn. The balance—both of the forces on the ground and in a diplomatic and wider sense—is already beginning to turn. The announcement of the investigation of Karadzic and Mladic for war crimes and the fact that they are likely to be indicted before the end of the year, will increasingly isolate the nationalist Serbs, both politically and diplomatically, and exclude them from future discussions as genuine partners. In retrospect, that will be seen as a major turning point in the history of the conflict.

At the same time, the war on the ground is moving against the nationalist Serbs, with the reconquest of western Slavonia, the capture of Mount Vlasic in Bosnia and the fact that Croat forces are within shelling distance of the Krajina capital, Knin. In all, the evidence provided by recent events means that the old adage that there cannot be any military solution to the war cannot be sustained. There can be a military solution. It will take time, but the strategic position of the nationalist Serbs is weak. They lack population, are thinly stretched and are slowly being cut off from resources.

**Mr. Gapes:** Is my hon. Friend saying that he would be happy for the military conflict to continue for perhaps three or five years, with our lightly armed British personnel sitting ducks in the middle? That does not seem to be a helpful solution, or a means of getting a peaceful outcome to the conflict or of saving the lives of British soldiers.

**Mr. Macdonald:** It is fair to say that threats to UNPROFOR personnel have come from the nationalist Serb forces. The further removed they are, the better it will be. I was pointing out that the balance of force and the reality on the ground are beginning to change and that is not merely my view. In *The Guardian* on 3 May, General Michael Rose said:

> "The Pale leadership clearly has yet to learn that, although the world may not be prepared to fight a war on behalf of the Bosnian government, the Bosnian Serb army is already overstretched, sanctions are hurting, and that to delay a peace settlement might cost them all that they have hitherto gained."

He recognises that their long-term position is weak and unsustainable. We are often lectured about having to pay heed to the reality on the ground, but that reality is changing. Time is on the side of those who want a multi-ethnic, multicultural, democratic Bosnia. Why should we and the Bosnian Government settle for anything less than that goal?

I am not convinced that the Foreign Office has woken up to that shift in the balance. The days are gone when the nationalist Serbs could reject peace plan after peace plan and the international community would return each time with a fresh compromise. We need a new determination and consistency on the preservation of Bosnia, the prosecution of war crimes, the delivery of humanitarian aid and the protection of safe areas. The Government signed up to those goals and they will be judged by how their actions match their rhetoric.

Before I finish, I must tell the House about a couple I met when I was in Tuzla. The wife was a councillor in the local Tuzla administration. I visited the couple at home and had assumed that both partners were Muslims, because the wife was politically active. However, she turned out to be a Croat from Dalmatia, and although her husband was from Tuzla, he was a Serb who had been fighting with the Bosnian Government forces since the beginning of the war. Sadly, his brother had been killed in the front line. They were fighting not for an ethnically pure community—how could they?—or to achieve the removal of any part of the population from that region, but for a multi-ethnic, plural, democratic society in Bosnia.

We not only share those principles, but they underlie all the progress that we have made in Europe since 1945 and which we have been celebrating this weekend. Those are the principles that we should apply in former Yugoslavia.

8.20 pm

**Mr. Robert Key** (Salisbury): We were right not to pass by on the other side. Among many uncertainties that I have about the Balkans, that is a certainty.

First, I congratulate the service men and women from this country who are either in the Balkans or in a support role in this country—the tail which is so often forgotten in these circumstances. I also congratulate the Overseas Development Administration and its officials and staff, and the non-governmental organisations, which are doing such a tremendous job in the Balkans. I applaud the skill and patience of my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary and the determination of my right and learned hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence. Both have been outstanding, as I have discovered while searching back over the past two or three years to find a trend in British policy towards the conflict in former Yugoslavia and see where we are going.

It is clear that tens of thousands of lives have been saved because of the United Nations and British intervention, and I for one am proud of that achievement. Whether one calls what the British forces have been doing a "peacekeeping" or "buffer" role is academic: the fact remains that British Army doctrine is leading the world in that area. I gather that a new publication on peacekeeping has attracted sales of tens of thousands—even from the French, despite the fact that it is in English, which is really going it. I therefore congratulate the Ministry of Defence as well.

There is fighting on both sides in former Yugoslavia just today. Arms are getting through—no one knows exactly how, although there are many suspicions. The tragedy is that 13 British soldiers have already lost their lives and 162 United Nations soldiers are dead. I am sure

that it is in Britain's interests, first, that we follow the need for humanitarian aid—we have a moral obligation to do that—and, secondly, that we maintain a diplomatic effort. It is clear that there can be no military winners in this conflict, but it is in Britain's interest to ensure that we play a full role in the diplomatic effort in former Yugoslavia, not least because of the danger of the spread of uncertainty and conflict.

Many people in this country forget just how close former Yugoslavia is. As they speed away on their package holiday to Rhodes, they might wonder why their plane is diverted instead of going in a straight line. When they are off to the Greek playgrounds, they might wonder why they cannot take the route that they flew before—or drive there, as I did as a student 30 years ago. They might also wonder why the Italians are so concerned about the conflict—until they look at a map and discover that the shelling of Zagreb takes place only 100 miles from Italy.

We should also remember the sheer scale of the operation for our country. The account that my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary gave of the numbers involved was a little conservative. If one includes the Royal Fleet Auxiliary staff, the Royal Marines, the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force people—all 800 of them—in Italy, and all the Army personnel, the figure is nearer 6,500.

Former Yugoslavia has seen a century of remarkable turbulence. Substantial readjustment would always have had to be made following the collapse of the Tito regime and it would be foolish to imagine that we could stop that turbulence in a year or even five years. If one thing is worse than a religious war, it is a tribal war, and in this instance we have both.

Twenty-nine years ago, when I was driving through Yugoslavia as a student, I was stoned in Montenegro. I have often asked myself and many other people why I and my student friends from Cambridge should have been stoned. Was it because we looked like hippies? My hair may have been a shade longer—it was certainly not white with wisdom. I probably looked a little like a German. We were driving on a new road that had just been opened up through the mountains, and it had opened a whole valley to the influence of new people and ideas. There was massive suspicion, prejudice and, of course, ignorance.

Above all, I was simply foreign, and those people were not used to foreigners. In any event, I brought back the stone that dented my little old Sunbeam Rapier. A few miles down the road, we were swept to the side of the road to let a large black limousine with many outriders go past, and were told that that was Marshal Tito. So I remember the Yugoslavia of the 1960s, when there was much hope for that part of Europe, with its glorious environment and countryside. It has been a tragedy to see so much decline.

On British policy, I looked back over the weekend, between celebrations in my constituency of Salisbury, at the debate in the House on 25 September 1992, when my right hon. Friend the Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King) said:

"By any military standards, the situation in the former Yugoslavia is a textbook example of what Britain should not become involved in. It is difficult to imagine a more appallingly difficult situation. There are no clear objectives. There is every prospect of getting sucked into an open-ended commitment, starting with humanitarian aid and the escorting of convoys and released prisoners from the detention camps—all the most worthy and desirable objectives. Yet there is the greatest risk of a spread of the conflict.

In 1964 we went into Cyprus and we are still there."

He said later:

"I always said there could come a time when we could no longer walk by on the other side."—[*Official Report*, 25 September 1992; Vol. 212, c. 143-144.]

I strongly agree.

By 14 January 1993, when my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence made a statement to the House on further deployment in Bosnia, he set the tone by saying:

"It is no exaggeration to say that there are many people in Bosnia today who owe their very survival to the presence of British and other United Nations forces . . . our paramount concern was for the safety of British troops. This, of course, is still the case . . .

None of this marks any change in our policy in the area. . . . Our position remains that it is not appropriate to intervene in what is essentially a civil war. Our overriding concern, as always, is to ensure the safety of our forces."—[*Official Report*, 14 January 1993; Vol. 216, c. 1057.]

He said:

"Clearly, it is desirable that the project should continue but not 'at all costs'."—[*Official Report*, 14 January 1993; Vol. 216, c. 1061.]

Following through the thinking in the Ministry of Defence, it is clear that we were facing a difficult situation with the arms embargo and much play was made about the Russians and Americans. It is clear that if the arms embargo were lifted there would then be fighting and UNPROFOR would be caught up in it. If that happened, the UN would withdraw.

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces, my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames), who was no doubt wearing a very sober suit at the time, said:

"We judge that lifting the arms embargo would lead to an intensified conflict, with severe risks that UNPROFOR would be caught up in the fighting and lose its impartiality in the eyes of the warring factions. In such circumstances, UNPROFOR could no longer carry out the UN mandate and would have to withdraw."—[*Official Report*, 21 November 1994; Vol. 250, c. 57.]

Last week, my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary said something very significant. Replying to my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell), he said:

"An arms embargo is currently applied to all sides. Obviously, it has been breached to a certain extent, probably by all sides . . . Removing the arms embargo would mean the certain withdrawal of UNPROFOR."—[*Official Report*, 3 May 1995; Vol. 259, c. 329.]

That surely can only mean either that it will not make any difference if there is any fighting or that he was so certain that there would be fighting if the arms embargo was lifted that he was prepared to say that there would be withdrawal following the lifting of the arms embargo. In recent days, therefore, there has been a significant shift.

In a letter that my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary sent to all Members of the House, he said:

"We do not want to withdraw, but that may become the only option. The planning for what would be a difficult operation is nearly complete.

The next few weeks are important."

Obviously the position is very fluid.

We shall have a difficult time, not least because of what several of my hon. and right hon. Friends and Opposition Members have mentioned—the interest in, and reporting by, the media. The hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) referred to something which I also intended to mention. I refer to the remarkable comment by the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid)—I told the hon. Gentleman that I intended to quote him

*[Mr. Robert Key]*

with approbation—who said in the debate on the Army, and it was a pity that there were not more people present for that debate:

"The inadequacy of press and media reports was brought home to me. I stood in Gorazde and listened to the BBC World Service, which was saying that, for several days, a major artillery bombardment of Gorazde by the Serbs had been going on. I stood with the Muslim commander and not a shot had been fired for five weeks. Yet the BBC was continually repeating the news that the Serbs were bombarding Gorazde. I merely add a word of caution: a propaganda war is going on, and none of the press reports can be taken at face value to establish the facts."—[*Official Report*, 23 February 1995; Vol. 255, c. 527.]

That is a disturbing development in the entire conflict in the former Yugoslavia. The journalists, with the best will in the world, are obviously not in a position to be able to make objective judgments of what is going on. They are under enormous pressure, perhaps from their hosts and guardians of the day. In any event we need to, shall we say, take with a pinch of salt the commentaries which come from that country.

In the aftermath of war, there is always great trouble for the civilian population. I was delighted to hear my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary saying that about 300 mines had already been cleared. One of the factors that has affected my thinking about Yugoslavia is the fact—it is an irony, as we have been celebrating VE day at the weekend—that I am here only by the choice of my electorate and extraordinary good fortune.

On Friday 13 May 1955, a group of us were playing, as 10-year-old schoolboys, on Swanage beach and one of my friends discovered what he thought was a tin of Spam in the sand. I turned away; I was bored. I went down the beach with a friend, Richard Dunstan, now a doctor. There was a blast and I was in the water, and five of my friends were dead as a result of an anti-personnel mine which had not been properly cleared by our side.

That had a pretty profound effect on my political outlook on Europe, but it also taught me that I am very fortunate indeed to be alive. I am especially keen that, whatever else we may do in the former Yugoslavia, we do all we can to ensure the clearance of mine fields, which may wreak so much havoc for so many years for so many people if we do not. Thank goodness that we have organisations such as the Halo trust, with people serving throughout the world.

If the time comes to withdraw from the former Yugoslavia, it will cost an enormous amount. That should not be the main issue, and it will not be. However, I believe that all the estimates that I have heard are underestimates. I do not know what the true figure will be, but I imagine that withdrawal will cost billions of dollars and take months rather than weeks. If we are talking about a mediaeval type of war in which one packs up for a few months when the snow falls, it will be the beginning of next winter before any of the United Nations troops could begin to come out. We need to bear that in mind.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gosport (Mr. Viggers), whose speech I admired enormously, said that of course our troops cannot stop the war, and that is quite right. He said that they had the wrong weapons; that, too, is true. I believe that they also have the wrong rules of engagement to allow them to perform that duty. One of the big problems—and, I believe, mistakes—in the former Yugoslavia has been the fact that the dual key of the United Nations and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation has not worked. If anything, it has been to the disadvantage of United Nations troops, wherever they may have come from.

If we have to withdraw, I urge that there must be NATO supremacy. If we are having our bluff called by brigands, as my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Sir P. Cormack) said, we must at least be absolutely sure that the chain of command is not too long, and certainly not so tortuous that we have to have a dual key.

The balance continues to be in favour of carrying on the mission for the United Nations in the former Yugoslavia—just. If France withdraws—and it looks as though France will withdraw—I believe that we shall have to do so, too. I believe that we should not withdraw unilaterally, but I think that France may. If we did not have France there as the second biggest force, I suspect that we would have to withdraw anyway. If we have to withdraw, the Government can count on my support. It will be an extremely difficult decision to make. It will be based on factors including a great deal of intelligence that is not available to Members of the House, and I respect that, but it will be a judgment that will stretch my right hon. Friends in the Cabinet, and I shall support them.

A week ago today, I was in Italy with the Commander in Chief Allied Forces Southern Europe and members of the Defence Select Committee. If we are talking about British policy on the former Yugoslavia, we cannot fail to consider the effect on Italy. I strongly believe that Italy has been underestimated as an ally and that we should turn more attention to our relationship with Italy. Considering that the entire United Nations operation in the former Yugoslavia depends on Italy and any withdrawal will depend completely on Italy's participation, it is extraordinary that Italy is not a member of the contact group. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence will reconsider that position, considering how crucial it will be in coming weeks.

Italy needs all the support it can get, from the European Union and more especially from NATO. The biggest problem, perhaps, that it has at present is public opinion in Italy concerning military matters. That is undermining the credibility of the Italian forces in the eyes of the Ministry of Defence. It was convenient, under former regimes in Italy and under the influence of the Communist party in Italy, to have a general atmosphere of not caring much about defence in any event. That atmosphere fell in well with the relationship of those regimes with the former Soviet Union. However, it is a dangerous position to be in.

There is a huge budget problem in Italy, but I hope very much that Italy will place orders for the EH101. I toured the Agusta factory and it was extraordinary to me that, although the Italian taxpayer had paid for half the development costs of that magnificent aircraft, the Italian Government had not yet placed a single order.

However, something wider in Italy is disturbing—the issue of conscription, a problem that we put behind us many years ago. When I asked the Italian Minister of Defence why the Ministry of Defence was so worried about conscription, the answer came back: "Because of the cohesion of the country". It is the old problem of a comparatively young nation, about 100 years old, in which the north continues to strain considerably to maintain cohesion with the south. The Italian Ministry of

Defence finds it important to place conscripts from both ends of Italy together in a military situation. We cannot ignore the role of Italy in our relations with former Yugoslavia.

My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary said on 25 September 1992:

"Neither we nor the CSCE nor the UN yet have the aptitude or the powers to sort out problems within central or eastern European countries or the countries of the former Soviet Union, and we must remember that what is happening in Bosnia and the former Yugoslavia is being repeated in two or three countries of the former Soviet Union to the east of Europe, where there are no television cameras and only occasional visitors."—[*Official Report*, 25 September 1992; Vol. 212, c. 126.]

I am sure that he was right. I ask myself how far we have advanced since then. The hon. Member for Livingston alluded to that trend in our thinking in his very interesting speech. It is vital that we consider the former Yugoslavia as part of a wider picture in the Balkans and on the southern front of NATO.

There is a new threat and we need to have new responses to it. Italy is at the centre of an arc of crisis from northern Africa to Chechenya, characterised by political instability, ailing economies, internal disputes and by the instability of north Africa, with its artificial borders and tribal patterns. We should not forget that the Italian economy depends on the important energy resources of northern Africa.

There is also the whole question of Islamic fundamentalism, which we in this country have only begun to consider seriously as part of our foreign and defence policies. Islamic fundamentalism is not just about Islam, which will not inherently threaten us, but Islam tends to permit extremism and anti-western feeling and it can be a source of terrorism in those countries which embrace it. That can lead to enormous tensions, whether between Israel and the Arabs or between the states of Europe.

We cannot ignore the question of migration or illegal immigration. Albania, Tunisia, Libya, Algeria and the former Yugoslavia have seen examples of economic migration and refugees fleeing war. We should think about that issue much more. I was stimulated by a visit last week to the Istituto Affari Internazionali, the international affairs think-tank in Rome, where I heard some very interesting ideas about, for example, the possible establishment of employment and industry in north Africa which would encourage closing the economic gap between north Africa and Europe and discourage economic migration. After all, we are talking about water, food and jobs—resource allocation at its most basic. One of the tragedies of the former Yugoslavia is that such a potentially prosperous part of Europe has seen such sad and rapid decline.

If we are considering our foreign and defence policies in that part of the world, we must maintain, first and foremost, the importance of not decoupling from the United States of America. We should not expand NATO too fast. Above all, we must try to keep Greece and Turkey on side and prevent them from entering into any further disputes. We must also listen to public opinion in this country, and that will be particularly crucial when it comes to a possible withdrawal from or an escalation of our involvement in the former Yugoslavia.

I conclude by referring to an opinion poll which I conduct every spring in my constituency. I shall be totally honest about it: I polled more than 2,000 paid-up members of the Conservative association in my constituency and this year 532 of them responded to quite a long questionnaire. It contained a small section on defence and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence may be interested to know the results. The questionnaire stated:

"Military spending must always be a high priority".

Some 97 per cent. of the respondents agreed with that statement. The survey continued:

"We should maintain our nuclear deterrent".

Some 95 per cent. of those polled agreed with that statement. Of the respondents, 79 per cent. agreed that:

"On Salisbury Plain troops must respect the environment".

However, when the survey said:

"UK should send more troops to Bosnia to help UN,"

only 9 per cent. of the respondents agreed.

8.43 pm

**Mr. Malcolm Wicks** (Croydon, North-West): I am still reflecting on the findings of that very interesting survey of a totally unrandom sample of the British public. Despite the fact that it was a survey of Conservative party members, the Labour party respects their views in the same way as we respect the views of all other minority groups in our society.

**Mr. Macdonald:** I am sorry to interrupt my hon. Friend so early in his speech, but he may not have seen the recent opinion poll of a wider and more random sample group. It showed that a clear majority of the British public is in favour of the work that the British Army is doing in Bosnia and would support further involvement should that prove necessary. That shows how out of touch Conservative Members are with the feelings of the British public.

**Mr. Wicks:** I thank my hon. Friend for that comment.

I rise to speak in the debate because, like other hon. Members who have noted it, I too am struck by the coincidence that yesterday our nation celebrated the 50th anniversary of VE day and today we are discussing the conflict in the former Yugoslavia. It is a coincidence of timing that should challenge us all and encourage thoughtful and sombre reflection about where we are in Bosnia and the former Yugoslavia. It puts into context all the talk that we have heard recently about 50 years of peace in Europe. In Bosnia, just two hours flying time from London, we find experiences that mock our pretensions about the strengths of collective security in Europe.

I was born a few years after the end of the second world war and, as I grew up in the 1950s and early 1960s, I learned more about the causes and the experiences of that war. I remember when I first saw, as many other hon. Members would have done, the flickering black and white television pictures from the concentration camps. We not only asked how this could have occurred, but we were struck by the conviction that we would never again see or allow genocide on any scale in Europe. We vowed that we would never again tolerate such naked aggression or territorial gain of that kind by military conquest, certainly not in Europe.

Obviously the scale in the former Yugoslavia is different, but the experience has been much the same. Therefore, we should ask very humbly why we have again tolerated such genocide and naked aggression on the edges of Europe. In that post-war period we created the

*[Mr. Wicks]*

United Nations and we believed that, through the United Nations and by other alliances, we would prevent that kind of genocide in the future. Many of us who believed ultimately in the goal of peace recognised that we needed to expend money and large percentages of our national wealth on the military to prevent the threat of such incidents occurring again.

In our more recent history, many of us to the political left of centre tried to analyse the Falklands war and the Argentine invasion and, more recently, the invasion of Kuwait by the Iraqis. Many found that analysis and the question of whether we could support such a war very difficult indeed. Many of us were persuaded to support the military expedition into Kuwait because we believed our leaders' assurances that higher principles were at stake than mere materialism or oil. We believed that it was a war against naked aggression and that the independence of a sovereign state was worth fighting for. Therefore, we supported the war. Perhaps we were wrong to believe that high principles were at stake; perhaps we were gullible in thinking that ethical and moral considerations were at stake and that the conflict was not just about oil and western profits.

I think that many people feel that, if we adopt only old-fashioned definitions of national interest in the future, we will find ourselves in deep trouble. There may be a strong national interest in defending things for humanitarian reasons. Many of our citizens might support military projects if mere humanity and not just precious resources were at stake. Perhaps when our elders, betters and leaders told us that they wished to create a new world order, we believed them too readily. Perhaps we were foolish to believe that the rhetoric had some ethical meaning that would outlast the mere weeks of convenience when it seemed to wrap the conquest of Iraq in a cloak of virtue.

However, those of us who argued against friends and colleagues that the war against Iraq was worth supporting always realised that one day our beliefs would be tested, that there would come an occasion when western profits were not at stake, and neither were money, cash, oil or other precious resources, but merely people and their nation. That test has come in the former Yugoslavia, especially in Bosnia.

I have listened carefully to hon. Members on both sides of the House who know more than I do about the former Yugoslavia, and certainly more than I know about military adventures, and I have realised the complexity of the situation. Of course one knows that nothing is ever black and white, and that in wars there are always atrocities and evils on all sides. However, one thing is clear: the newly sovereign state of Bosnia has been the victim of territorial aggression. Much more than that, its people have been the victims of ethnic cleansing and mass rape—not the rapes that occur on all sides in any war but, it appears, a policy of the mass rape of Bosnian women, used as a deliberate act of military conquest. I do not recall such a policy being enacted in any other war, and that makes it an act of especial evil.

We have also seen genocide against the Bosnian people—although not, as has already been said, on the scale practised by Nazi Germany. None the less, we are talking about evil, and that is why, with others, I want to remind the House about the challenge that this debate brings us, when yesterday we were celebrating, and not only celebrating but remembering and thinking through the implications half a century after VE day.

What has been the west's response? We have heard clear proclamations from many institutions, most importantly our United Nations, but also from the European Union, NATO and other western bodies. Those declarations have all pointed in the same direction. Two years ago, the Foreign Secretary said:

> "Military conquest in Bosnia cannot achieve gains which are accepted. It is not enough to fly flags over ruined towns and villages. Worthwhile gains are not be secured by making a desert and calling it peace. There is no future for Bosnian Serbs down that path".—[*Official Report*, 29 April 1993; Vol. 223, c. 1169.]

I ask the Secretary of State for Defence a simple question: is it still the Government's policy that the Serbs will gain nothing by military conquest? That policy has been articulated so well by the right hon. and learned Gentleman himself, by the Prime Minister and by the Foreign Secretary. Is it or is it not still the Government's policy? We need to know the answer.

With others, I applaud all those who have worked for the forces of good in the former Yugoslavia—UNPROFOR, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and many others in the voluntary sector. I applaud the many organisations and ordinary decent human beings who in that hell have worked for a better society for the people of Bosnia and for others in the former Yugoslavia. We applaud all the United Nations troops, but we shall be forgiven for applauding our own in particular, not least on this day when we remember acts of particular heroism by soldiers in those most difficult conditions.

However, in the face of repeated and evil aggression the overall response of our Government and of the west as a whole has consisted essentially of huffing and puffing that has added little or nothing to the policy of trying to combat aggression by the Serbs. At great expense, NATO planes fly over the former Yugoslavia monitoring, patrolling and working out where the Serbian guns are, in order to report to New York.

Similarly, the United Nations monitoring officers often operate in the most hazardous of areas. I pay tribute to them, too, as my colleagues and I met two of them doing their most important work in Pale at the end of 1993. They count the shells out in great detail, and estimate from whence they are coming and where in Sarajevo or anywhere else they are landing. Again, reports are filed with their seniors, notably the United Nations in New York. However, that usually leads to nothing.

That brings me to the reluctance to use air strikes. I believe that the British Government in particular, have placed the brake on the use of air strikes. At different times when the United States Government clearly wished to take a firmer approach to the conflict in Bosnia and to stand up to the aggression by the Serbian regime of Dr. Karadzic, British Ministers said no, and urged caution.

The history books will show that the west's overall response has been poor, but the role of the British Government will stand to be especially condemned. In recent years the Serbs have tested, prodded and then understood the feebleness of the west's response. Sadly, every time Ministers from the Ministry of Defence or the Foreign and Commonwealth Office have stood up in the

House to comment on the situation, when the speeches have been analysed they have served as a green light for further Serbian aggression.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House have mentioned the recent tragedy in a suburb of Sarajevo, in which innocent citizens were killed. Despite the pleading of the general who should have been in charge, senior United Nations officials said, "No, not even on this occasion will we use the sanction of air strikes." Even now the House and the Government could show some resolution. Especially when military commanders ask for them, we must allow the use of air strikes, not least for the protection of safe havens. Others have argued with great authority why we should do that, and I add my voice to theirs.

We have heard little on the subject from Ministers recently, but we need a vigorous and rigorous pursuit of the war criminals. One should not have to say that 50 years after 1945, when Britain was soon to see the Nuremberg trials. There are war criminals. We are talking about mass rapes, genocide and ethnic cleansing. Who are the criminals? They are the soldiers on the ground, but who gave them their orders? Are those people being pursued? At long last there are signs of the United Nations pursuing war criminals. Does the pursuit of war crimes have the full support—including financial support—of the British Government?

Will the Secretary of State for Defence say something about war criminals and their pursuit when he replies to the debate? Will he touch on the difficulties faced by some senior British UN officials in their daily contact with Dr. Karadzic, when they know—and we know—that they are dealing with a war criminal who one day may have to appear before the world's court?

That brings us back to our celebration of victory in Europe 50 years ago. There have been celebrations and acts of sad remembrance, but learning the full lessons of 50 years ago involves more than celebration and humming along to well-known old songs. We must relearn the lessons of 1945 in a more complex post-war period.

Bosnia is a proud and democratic cosmopolitan society, particularly Sarajevo, which I visited for three days at the end of 1993. It is a proud and democratic city. The fact that it is still being shelled mocks our pretensions of celebrating VE day and challenges our post-war hopes.

In the face of genocide more than 50 years after the holocaust, our Foreign Office policy has never dared speak its name. British foreign policy has once again been one of appeasement. Once, 55 years ago, appeasement was thrown out by our nation and our House of Commons in favour of action, and hand wringing was eventually rejected to make room for resolution. All these years later, that may be the most valuable lesson to learn from our history—the lesson that appeasement never pays and that firm action must be supported.

9 pm

**Mr. Mike Gapes** (Ilford, South): In 1987, I visited the museum of the young Bosnians in Sarajevo. On the pavement just outside are, allegedly, the footprints showing from where the shots were fired to assassinate Archduke Ferdinand, which started world war one.

I was taken round the museum with a tourist group by a young woman of 19 or 20 who was extolling the great attributes and virtues of the great Serbian patriots. I asked her, "Are you a communist?" and she said that she was. I said, "If you are a communist, I cannot understand why you are extolling an individual act of terrorism. I thought that Lenin was against terrorism of that kind." But she said, "No. They were great Serb nationalists and partisan heroes." I said, "But the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand led to a war in which tens of millions of people were killed, and that in turn led to another world war in which tens of millions of people died." She replied, "What is the death of millions of people compared with the freedom of a nation?" That was 1987, and it was the voice of a young, intelligent, English-speaking Serbian communist woman.

I suspect that, in similar conversations, such statements could have been made by Croats or members of other national groups in the former Yugoslavia. When I hear talk of appeasement and simple solutions, my mind goes back to that conversation. The conflict in the former Yugoslavia is far more complex, difficult and tragic and any simple solution from outside is unlikely to produce a result.

It was noticeable that the VE day celebrations in Britain were attended by the President of the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the President of the Republic of Croatia, the President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the President of the Republic of Slovenia, yet there was no one representing one third of the population of the former Yugoslavia in Krajina, Croatia, Bosnia, Montenegro or Serbia. That is ironic since the anniversary of the liberation of the Jasenovac concentration camp took place only a few days ago.

My hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) gave a detailed historical description of the mistakes that have been made, which I shall not repeat, but at the risk of being labelled an appeaser or pro-Serb, which seems to be a term of insult used to describe those of us who say that the situation is complex and that we should consider it in its historical context, I want to say a few more things about what has happened in Croatia and the former Yugoslavia generally.

First, we must recognise that Yugoslavia is a 20th-century state established at the end of world war 1 to bring together Roman Catholic Croats, Muslims in Bosnia and elsewhere in what is now called Kosovo and the Orthodox Serbs who are found in different parts of the former Yugoslavia.

When the Nazis invaded Yugoslavia in April 1941, they completely crushed the Serbs, but they set up an independent state of Croatia, including what is now Bosnia-Herzegovina, under the Ustashi leader, Ante Pavelic. The Ustashi had a clear policy on the 2 million Orthodox Serbs in their state—convert a third, expel a third and kill a third. That was done systematically.

Between April and July 1941, the Ustashi converted, expelled and, above all, murdered hundreds of thousands of people, not just Serbs, but Jews and gipsies as well, cruelly, viciously and systematically.

In the summer of 1941, the Ustashi set up a chain of 20 concentration camps which were later used to expedite Hitler's final solution. The largest of those camps, Jasenovac, had a regular occupancy of between 3,000 and 6,000 inmates from autumn 1941 until May 1945. Few people sent to that concentration camp lived longer than three months. According to camp rules, if they lived that long, they were executed anyway. In that period, it is

*[Mr. Mike Gapes]*

estimated that some 70,000 people perished in the camp, which is in the area that has just been liberated from the Serb population of Krajina by the Tudjman regime.

Reference has already been made to the former second lieutenant, Dinko Sakic, the final commander of that camp. From April 1945 onwards, the Ustashi guards at Jasenovac toiled day and night to slaughter those still surviving—Serbs, Jews and gipsies. They did so under the control of Dinko Sakic. The killing stopped on 2 May 1945 only when Tito's partisans finally liberated the area.

Anybody who is thinking and talking about events of the past week in Croatia has to understand that context. When we hear talk of appeasement, we must understand that history and that it is a little simple to associate the partisan-led, communist-led, predominantly Serb partisan forces and their successors with the Ustashi fascists of that period in quite such a glib way.

I shall make two more points. The hon. Member for Gosport (Mr. Viggers) made what I thought was a very intelligent speech describing the difficulties of the military situation in the former Yugoslavia. He made a number of pertinent suggestions. I draw attention to the report of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs, "The Expanding Role of the United Nations and its Implications for United Kingdom Policy", published on 23 June 1993. Recommendations 13 and 14 state:

"We consider that calls for military deployment on the ground to enforce in Bosnia a disputed peace plan have been misconceived: troops equipped for peace-keeping or humanitarian protection work cannot be transformed into a UN fighting force simply by passing a new Security Council resolution."

It continued:

"We are not persuaded that it is practicable to try to impose a peace plan in Bosnia from outside. We fear that attempting so to impose a plan for the constitutional structure of part of former Yugoslavia could make things worse rather than better for the civilian population, as well as having serious consequences for the safety of UN personnel there, which includes a large British contingent".

Those words were right then and they remain right.

It is important that we recognise the limitations under which the UN mandate and the UN forces have been operating in recent years. It is regrettable that when the Security Council has met to try to find political fudges to deal with irreconcilable national differences between simplistic positions pushed in Washington and more realistic assessments put forward in Europe, it has made unworkable and unenforceable proposals that have led to great difficulties for the people on the ground who have to try to deal with the situation.

We must learn from the experience of peacekeeping not only in former Yugoslavia but elsewhere. One cannot expect the United Nations forces on the ground, the blue helmets, to solve intractable, religious, ethnic and political conflicts in states or between states. Those problems are deep-seated, complex and require serious, long-term solutions. The quick-fix approach so favoured in Washington and, unfortunately, supported by some hon. Members, will make matters far worse.

The Foreign Secretary seemed to be talking about conditions under which withdrawal might be necessary. He said that if the arms embargo were lifted, we would need to withdraw. He then admitted, as have others, that, in fact, the arms embargo is not really working anyway. He said that if the fighting flared up—it has flared up and it is flaring up—or if there were no signs of an effective peace process, we would need to withdraw. Given the attitude of the Bosnian Government, who clearly are not interested in a peace settlement on available terms and have used the ceasefire to rearm, re-equip and redeploy their forces, the attitude of the Bosnian Serbs, who clearly are not interested in a peace settlement, and the attitude now of the Croatian Government and their supporters in Bosnia, it is realistic to say that there is no sign of an effective peace process.

If we are serious about withdrawal, we must consider how long it would take. If it becomes necessary—and I think it will—we must think about when it will be carried out. This is May, and if withdrawal takes six months, we need to think about the onset of winter. The forces have been there through two winters in difficult conditions. It is a terrible thing to say, but perhaps we have been lucky that casualties have been so low. We should think of what withdrawal would be like in a third winter, when the conflict might be much greater. Perhaps we cannot get the forces out, but what is the point of their staying if they cannot do the job that they are there to do?

I do not normally feel sorry for the Foreign Secretary but I have enormous sympathy for him because of the dilemma in which he finds himself, and I admire the way in which he put it. We are in an impossible situation, and we have to convince the British people of that because talk of appeasement, winning for one side and of the balance of force shifting is not the right approach. We must soon come to the view that we cannot go on any longer. We must recognise that there is a limit to how long we can simply sit ineffectively hoping for something to turn up.

9.16 pm

**Dr. David Clark** (South Shields): The debate has been well informed, and a great many hon. Members have taken part. It has been characterised by the deep sincerity of every hon. Member who spoke. They all expressed their views with deep conviction. The right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell) admitted that he was pessimistic, and my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Gapes) also ended on a pessimistic note.

The views that were expressed in the debate have not followed the traditional Government-Opposition line. The views of some Conservative Members were identical to those of some of my hon. Friends, but the House is none the poorer for that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South gave us a telling, chilling reminder of what is happening in that piece of land that is called Croatia in the former Yugoslavia. My hon. Friend has had much experience over the years in international matters, and as he was also the last Back-Bench Member to speak in the debate, what he said makes a deeper impression because it is fresh in our minds.

By contrast, my hon. Friend the Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) spoke with optimism about some of his experiences in Sarajevo, and my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Wicks) also had a different view and a different interpretation. The House benefits from such views.

This is one of a series of debates. Over the past three years, I think that I have attended all the debates on Bosnia and the former Yugoslavia. I have heard people

hone their arguments, and I have perhaps detected a greater tolerance between hon. Members with different views. I have seen the House wrestle to try to decide the most propitious role for Britain and the United Nations in trying to avert an all-out war in the Balkans. On some occasions hon. Members have described the policy as one of containment, and I do not think that that is bad.

I remember in the early days arguing from the Opposition side of the House that there should be early pre-positioning and deployment of troops in Macedonia. That is something that my hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley, South (Mr. O'Hara) and the hon. Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) know a great deal about. That was a wise argument. We were so pleased that the Government, and later the international community, accepted that approach, and we have at least contained the problem in Macedonia.

Vigilance is always necessary. We must always be careful and we can never be complacent, but, so far, all-out war in the Balkans, which was so widely predicted three years ago, has not occurred. Having said that, we are all aware that an unhappy state and society exists in former Yugoslavia, Bosnia and Croatia.

As several hon. Members have mentioned, it is poignant that we are discussing military matters on the day after all of us, I think, have been involved in our own VE day celebrations. The hon. Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) made a great point of that. Coming from the base and constituency that he represents, that is not a surprise.

I think all 13 hon. Members who have spoken have paid tribute to the professionalism of British troops. It is timely that today we read the official notices in the newspapers that 41 members of our armed forces have been honoured for their services and bravery in former Yugoslavia. Congratulations go to them all from every hon. Member.

Just to make a point, I should like to mention some of the people honoured. It would be singularly appropriate to mention Corporal Wayne Mills, who was awarded the first conspicuous gallantry cross. Members will know that that is the highest award after the Victoria cross. He is a brave individual.

I am prepared to pay great tribute to General Sir Michael Rose. He has served this country well. He served 12 months in his office, and not many of his predecessors were able to stick the post for that period. It is virtually an impossible job, but he stuck to it and I am sure that he was as robust with Salidic, Izetbegovic and Karadzic as he was with my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook). General Rose told me about his robust and, I think, two-sided exchange with my hon. Friend. It was right that a debate took place, and it is healthy that politicians and senior military people have such a frank exchange of views.

Time and again, Lieutenant-Colonel David Santa-Olalla of the Duke of Wellington's Regiment showed his bravery and the strength of British officers by leading by example. His citation refers to his work in Gorazde. Having been to that enclave, I pay tribute to him. Those two officers received the distinguished service order.

Military crosses were won by Corporal Andrew Rainey and Sergeant Gary Cryer. It is important to mention non-commissioned officers. The great strength of the British Army and all armed forces lies in their NCOs. They go out with small detachments and, especially in former Yugoslavia, they have immense responsibility. They must take the decisions to interpret the rules of engagement. They are provoked almost beyond their wisdom, yet they manage, because of their training and discipline, to resist the temptation.

Largely through their experiences in Northern Ireland, where similar types of command and control operations exist, the NCOs of our British forces are among the best in the world. Perhaps it is worth while to recall, as other hon. Members have reminded us, that that bravery is not without danger. We have lost 13 of our troops. If we think of it in a more general way, with our troops being part of a larger force, 162 young men have lost their lives, 162 families throughout the world have been bereaved, and 162 families obviously wonder whether the price was worth paying. Those are not easy judgments to reach.

Opposition Members have tried to support the Government's policy in Bosnia. At times we have been ahead of them, but we believe that, by and large, they have followed the correct line. As my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Wicks) suggested, we have been disappointed about the Government's commitment to war crime trials; we consider that very important, and I hope that the Secretary of State for Defence will assure us that the Government are entirely committed to the exercise.

We have concentrated on Bosnia in our debates, but the events of the past week have again highlighted the problems in Croatia as a potential flashpoint in the wider war that may emerge in the Balkans. That may indeed be a danger: we shall have to watch the position carefully. We are all wondering what action to take against the Serbs for the breach of the UN's safe area mandate; meanwhile, I hope that every diplomatic effort is being made to point out to President Tudjman that he flagrantly invaded a UN-protected area of sector west. I do not think that that serious issue has been raised during this debate, or generally.

It is appropriate that both the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Ministry of Defence are involved in the debate, and highly appropriate for it to have been opened by the Foreign Secretary. That has served to emphasise what I regard as the cardinal point: ultimately, the problems in the Balkans can be resolved only through negotiation and diplomacy. I firmly believe that the country that we are discussing cannot be conquered by military means; we must have a diplomatic solution. That was at the core of the argument advanced by my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), who made some thoughtful and positive suggestions.

Having said that, let me add that Opposition Members take the view that, if threats are to be made, there will come a time when they must be backed up. It cannot be right for threats against the United Nations to be treated with impunity. We believe that, while air power alone solves little, there are occasions—as we have seen in the past—when its use gets the message across.

I want to probe the Foreign Secretary on that, because I felt that he was not as forthcoming as he might have been. It was reported in today's newspapers that General Rupert Smith had requested air power, but had been overruled. May I ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether that is true? If so, was he overruled by Mr. Akashi or by his superior officer, General Bernard

*[Dr. David Clark]*

Janvier? It is important for the House to know whether the decision was made for diplomatic, political reasons, or for very good military reasons.

During the debate, it was argued that this was not a peacekeeping mission. The hon. Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) referred to a document entitled "Wider Peacekeeping", which has just been published by the British Army—a very good document, which the hon. Gentleman has clearly had time to examine. That manual differentiates between peacekeeping, wider peacekeeping and peace enforcement. It has been widely acclaimed, and I know that it is highly regarded in the United Nations. The publication gives interesting definitions for those three terms:

"In peacekeeping the performer carries only a balancing pole and there is a hushed and respectful silence in the crowd as the performer walks the tightrope."

In wider peacekeeping, the performer carries the same balancing pole, and walks the identical tightrope:

"He also has the general consent of the parties to the conflict. However, on this occasion it is apparent that not everyone approves of his performance and the circus audience is restive and noisy. Some individuals are even throwing missiles at the tightrope walker as he makes his journey."

That graphically makes the point that in Bosnia, we are playing a wider peacekeeping role. It is important that we understand that point, and it is clear that British troops already do so. Corporal Mills, whose award of the Conspicuous Gallantry Cross was announced today, said:

"Working for the United Nations in Bosnia is an extremely difficult job. You are not there to fight a war. Your aim is to ensure that the food and other supplies get through to the Bosnian population—the victims of the war.

You never know when one of the warring factions is going to take a dislike to the UN and start taking pot shots. You have to be prepared for it and respond to the situations as they occur."

Corporal Mills puts in clear terms Britain's mandate in Bosnia. It is incumbent on us all to make it clear to our constituents that restricted mandate and the fact that we do not have a peace enforcement role. Our role is to get the humanitarian aid through, and we have been most successful in that. As long as British troops can continue to do that, we ought to support them.

The Secretary-General of the UN requested reinforcements. I was pleased in January to hear the Secretary of State for Defence announce that the Government intended to dispatch another three Chinook, six Lynx and six Gazelle helicopters. Why are we waiting? What have no Chinook or Gazelle helicopters been delivered and only four of the six Lynx helicopters been delivered? There may be good reasons, but the House has a right to know them.

Will the Secretary of State for Defence clarify the Government's position on the arms embargo? On 31 July 1994, the Secretary of State—after stoutly maintaining opposition to any lifting of the embargo because it would put our ground troops at unnecessary risk—announced that Britain no longer opposed the lifting of the embargo. On 21 November, the hon. Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) was much more robust:

"We judge that the lifting of the arms embargo would lead to an intensified conflict with severe risks that UNPROFOR would be caught up in the fighting and lose its impartiality in the eyes of the warring factions. In such circumstances, UNPROFOR could no longer carry out the UN mandate and would have to withdraw."

I understand that, and I also heard the Foreign Secretary speak only last week about the need to withdraw UNPROFOR if the arms embargo was to be lifted. We know the consequences of lifting the embargo, but what is Government policy on that specific point?

I make one further point about the withdrawal of UN troops. I understand that it is very important to provide confidence in our ability to get the troops out if necessary. If we can get that confidence across, there is every reason to believe that the nations that have troops there will have the confidence to keep them there. It is a vital point.

I know that an international exercise has just finished, and that the Ministry of Defence and NATO are evaluating its results. I do not want press the Minister too hard on Operation Arcade Guard, but I want to press him on a couple of other points.

In the worst case scenario, if we and the rest of UNPROFOR have to withdraw our troops, we know, as has been said in the House today, that it may require up to 50,000 troops. The Americans are, I think, going to provide about half of those.

We are concerned about the different lengths of time that it has been suggested might be needed to withdraw. It has been suggested that withdrawal might take up to six months. Another suggestion is that it could be completed in six weeks. The shorter the period, the better the prospects for getting the troops out, if necessary. Can the Secretary of State for Defence assure us that everything is being done to facilitate the shortest period for extracting the troops?

Other hon. Members have raised this critical point, but I take it that it is absolutely certain that NATO will have the command and control of the troop extraction. I think that the whole House would be happier if that was the case. Perhaps the Secretary of State for Defence could say a word about the attitude of French Government on that point, because we understand that they have slight difficulties—theological difficulties, almost—with that command and control system.

The situation is Bosnia is very complicated. If it had been easy, we all know that the problem would have been solved. But the problem is there, and is not going to go away. The role of the UN has not always been understood, so the role of UNPROFOR and our troops has not always been understood.

We believe that our troops and UNPROFOR have been doing sterling work. We believe that they have kept alive tens of thousands of people, and that they are giving us the breathing space during which we can pursue diplomatic solutions. We equally accept that there may come a time when the risks to our troops are so great that we cannot justify them being there. If we can keep our troops there, and if they can continue doing a worthwhile job, the Government will have our support, as do the troops.

9.37 pm

**The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind):** It has been a feature of virtually all the speeches that have been made by hon. Members on both sides of the House to pay tribute to the courage and great skill with which our troops are carrying out their responsibilities in Bosnia and the former Yugoslavia. I do not lightly thank hon. Members for making such remarks because it is of very real importance to the morale of our forces in Bosnia and elsewhere to know that they have the unqualified

admiration and support of hon. Members on both sides of the House. That is something for which we can genuinely give thanks.

There has been an understandable and inevitable comparison or juxtaposition of the victory in Europe ceremonies and commemorations over the past few days with the fact that Europe is experiencing one of the most savage and traumatic wars within a state of Europe since the Spanish civil war in the 1930s.

There is a tendency in some quarters to suggest that somehow the responsibility for the sheer savagery and atrocity that we have seen in the former Yugoslavia has to be shared by the west as a whole or by the United Nations or by NATO. I understand the emotions that give rise to such comments, but I believe that it is crucial to emphasise that the responsibility for what happens in former Yugoslavia is to be found overwhelmingly with those within former Yugoslavia who have initiated the conflict. I sometimes hear suggestions that the conflict would have been avoided if only the west had done this or that or NATO had initiated this policy rather than that policy. I do not believe that such views are grounded in a credible explanation or analysis of the problem.

We are all well aware that, for a good number of years, former Yugoslavia was slowly but almost inevitably disintegrating. The forces that might have prevented that could have come only from within former Yugoslavia, not from outside. We know that, once Slovenia had declared its independence and Croatia had broken away, whatever the diplomacy of Germany or the European Union or whatever the views of the UN or NATO, the idea that Bosnia-Herzegovina could have escaped the consequences of the disintegration of Yugoslavia is not a correct analysis. In reaching a judgment about the success or failure of the UN and other forces that have been active there, one must bear that fact in mind.

Let me examine for a moment the suggestion by my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Sir. P. Cormack), that, in a fundamental way, the UN has failed in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Of course I accept that, if one measures success or failure by our aspirations, clearly the UN can be said to have failed. However, compared with all historical precedents by international organisations, a far more powerful case can be made that the UN, while not realising its full aspirations, has achieved more in Bosnia than in almost any previous operation either by the UN or by the League of Nations before it. One has only to go back to the previous great war within Europe, the Spanish civil war, to see that the League of Nations was unable to make even the most minor impact of a humanitarian kind and how the great powers adopted their clients and provided arms and in no way sought to dampen the conflict in that savage period.

That must be compared with what has been achieved over the past three years by British and other forces of the UN. It can be compared with what has happened in Angola, Cambodia or Somalia—other wars which are not dissimilar and where people have slaughtered each other in hundreds of thousands or, in the case of Cambodia, in millions. In those cases the UN could begin to be involved only once a ceasefire had been agreed. Only after a ceasefire was agreed in Cambodia, after many years of senseless slaughter, did the UN send forces for the first time. After 15 years of bloody civil war in Angola, it is only in the past few weeks, again when a political ceasefire has been agreed by the competing armies, that the UN has felt able to intervene.

We can compare all those facts with what has been achieved so far by the UN in Bosnia. In the past three years, as hon. Members have pointed out, many tens of thousands of lives have been saved. Many people would have been slaughtered in the conflict or would have died from starvation or from a lack of medical supplies. In addition, we should remember the not unreasonable forecast of three years ago, that, if we did not take the necessary steps, it would be a conflict not just in Bosnia but would spread to Macedonia, Kosovo and throughout the Balkans. That could still happen, but the fact that it has not happened yet is in no small measure due to the achievements of the United Nations in providing a focus for stability in Bosnia, Croatia and Macedonia.

**Sir Patrick Cormack:** Nobody—my right hon. and learned Friend has acknowledged this—disputes for a moment the wonderful work of the British and other troops working for UNPROFOR. However, to suggest that this is analogous to civil wars in Africa is not correct. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell), the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) and the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) have all said, this is not a civil war in the accepted sense of that phrase. It began as a war of aggression, with Serbia determined to create a greater Serbia.

**Mr. Rifkind:** While I was going to deal with that point later, I shall deal with it now in response to my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South. I hope that we will not get into too much of a terminological debate about whether the phrase "civil war" does or does not describe exactly what is happening within Bosnia. There is not much disagreement between the different points of view. We all acknowledge that President Milosevic and Serbia bear more responsibility than anyone else for the initiation of the conflict.

We also all accept that probably 95 per cent. of those doing the fighting in Bosnia are Bosnian Serbs, Bosnian Croats and Bosnian Muslims. There are no foreign armies in Bosnia, and Bosnia has not been invaded by another state. There is much external interference, but that is not a feature unique to this particular conflict. While my hon. Friend was right in saying that the various communities within Bosnia lived in peace and harmony with each other for many years, it is also true—as has been mentioned by a number of speakers—that Yugoslavia in general, and Bosnia in particular, has in the past experienced more bloody civil war, butchery and slaughter from all sides than almost any other part of Europe.

My hon. Friend must only look at the memoirs of that gallant soldier Sir Fitzroy Maclean, who, when he was sent to Yugoslavia during the war, recorded his instructions from Churchill as being to make contact with the various resistance groups and to identify and advise the British Government which of those groups was spending more time trying to kill Nazis than each other. As he concluded that Tito's partisans on balance—it was only on balance—were spending more time attacking the Nazis, the United Kingdom and our allies chose to give support to that group. There is a history which we cannot ignore, and there has been great internecine hatred in Bosnia.

*[Mr. Rifkind]*

The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) made a number of comments, some of which I agree with. He rightly emphasised the great importance of the UN and the international community not making threats which they are not prepared to carry out. I freely acknowledge—the British Government have emphasised this point on many occasions—that one of the great factors in this issue is the tendency of international organisations and politicians of all persuasions and from all parts of the world to declare that certain things are unacceptable and that certain matters will not be tolerated when it is clear that none of the Governments concerned, or the international community as a whole, intends doing the minimum necessary to give credence to those threats. I accept that there must be a link between the language we use and the action that we are prepared to take.

With regard to the use of air power within Bosnia, the UN and NATO have shown on several occasions their willingness to use such power in appropriate circumstances. Questions were raised regarding the response of the UN to the mortar attacks on Sarajevo in the past couple of days. I am not at liberty to speculate as to what detailed discussions might have taken place within the UN, but I agree with the hon. Member for Livingston that we must allow the UN's own chain of command to come to a judgment as to whether to ask NATO for military action in the specific case.

I strongly agree with the hon. Gentleman's remark that it is highly damaging to the authority and credibility of UN if evidence of internal disagreements within that chain of command become known. The matters should of course be discussed, but we believe that differences of opinion within the UN should be kept as matters to be resolved and presented to NATO and the international community in the manner suggested by the hon. Gentleman.

I refer to the remarks made about the implications for the NATO alliance of the strains and pressures which have developed between NATO and the UN in the past couple of years. My hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) and the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) pointed to the problems which have arisen as a result of the dual key, and the need for both the UN and NATO to agree before military action is taken.

It is perhaps inappropriate to say that the dual-key arrangements are the cause of the tension. They are the consequence, not the cause, of the phenomenon that, while the UN troop contributors are on the ground, the United States has been solely concerned with the use of air power. The need has arisen, therefore, for as long as that remains the case, for both ground and air commanders to be in agreement before military action is taken, or there will be grave danger to the lives and safety of forces on the ground.

It is precisely because the United States has agreed, in the event of any need to withdraw from Bosnia, to contribute substantial ground forces in addition to those being provided by the present troop contributors, that the problem of dual key will not arise with regard to NATO action that might be needed in the event of a withdrawal—NATO would be invited to supervise such a withdrawal. Clearly, if the United States, as well as western European and other countries, is on the ground with significant forces, it is right and proper that command and control can be concentrated in single hands.

**Mr. Macdonald:** Will the Secretary of State say something about the suggestion that British forces will be withdrawing from Gorazde, bearing in mind what happened in Bihac when the French forces withdrew and were replaced by a wholly inadequate force? Can he assure us that British forces will not be withdrawn until he is confident that they will be replaced by a force that is at least as competent?

**Mr. Rifkind:** We are not contemplating the withdrawal of any forces from Bosnia—

**Mr. Macdonald:** From Gorazde.

**Mr. Rifkind:** I am answering the hon. Gentleman.

Within Bosnia, how the UN uses the forces supplied by the various countries is primarily a matter for the UN commander. It is right and proper that the principle of rotation should apply, and we have expressed that view publicly as well as privately. One should not expect one country—whether Britain, France or wherever—to carry out one role, in an exposed way, over a prolonged period. Those matters are under discussion and no final decisions have been reached. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs emphasised earlier, the United Nations does not believe in the principle of unilateral action to withdraw troops from Bosnia-Herzegovina, and that will continue to be our policy.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) made some pertinent remarks about Macedonia, and I pay tribute to the responsible way in which the Government of that country have acted to try to ensure a continuation of stability in that locality. He raised one or two technical matters and there will, perhaps, be a letter on its way to him to deal with those matters for which I do not have direct responsibility.

On the basic question of whether the United Nations should stay in Bosnia-Herzegovina, or whether the case for withdrawal has changed significantly in recent times, my hon. Friend the Member for Gosport (Mr. Viggers) suggested that perhaps the time had come for those forces to be phased out. Indeed, my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell), in a speech to which I listened with great care, emphasised that forces could well be stuck there for up to 10 years before the war came to a conclusion.

We have emphasised that the presence of British forces in Bosnia should be based, first, on whether they can carry out the mandate that they have been given and, secondly, on whether they can do so without undue risk to themselves. When considering the arguments for and against their presence or withdrawal, let us also consider for a moment the advantages of withdrawals.

Clearly, the first would be the ending of risk to the lives and safety of British and other UN forces. Secondly, there is an argument that that presence has become pointless and that they are not achieving anything, or not sufficient to justify their continuing presence in the country. Thirdly, there is an argument—it was not heard much today, but it is raised occasionally—that the presence of the United Nations may prevent the

conclusion of the conflicts by creating a rigid situation that prevents either side from enforcing a military solution.

I understand those arguments. Like all such arguments, there is some truth in them all, but I must point out to the House the opposite point of view and the disadvantages that would flow from a premature withdrawal. We must contemplate what would happen if not just the United Kingdom but the United Nations withdrew from Bosnia, and see whether we are prepared to live with those consequences.

We must assume that the immediate impact would be the overrunning of the enclaves, not just of Gorazde, Tuzla or Srebrenica but of Sarajevo itself. Those would be difficult to defend because, even in the immediate aftermath of a withdrawal, the Bosnian Government would not have received any additional military hardware of a substantial kind in a time scale that would be likely to be decisive for that purpose. So enclaves controlled by the Bosnian Government would be immediately snuffed out.

Secondly, one must envisage the implications of the inevitable raising of the arms embargo in the event of a UN withdrawal. Do we wish to encourage that to be brought about, with the flooding of arms into Bosnia? Although arms have been getting to the Bosnian Government forces, they have certainly not included heavy artillery and weaponry which would be a consequence of the lifting of the embargo.

Another factor is whether we are simply contemplating withdrawal from Bosnia-Herzegovina and assuming that, somehow, the United Nations could continue in Macedonia and Croatia. That is a highly improbable scenario. We must accept that, if there were a withdrawal from Bosnia, it would have to be part of a wider withdrawal from the whole of former Yugoslavia, with all the consequences that could flow from that for Macedonia, Croatia and other parts of the region.

Finally, we must consider the implications for Kosovo, an area that has been extremely tense for a number of years, with a 90 per cent. Muslim population within an area controlled from Belgrade, which we know could at any time erupt into serious conflict.

Against that background, the other question that I would ask the House to consider, and which the British Government certainly consider as of great significance, is whether we can say at this stage that we must write off any prospect of a political settlement and that, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford predicted, the war will simply drag on month after month, year after year, for the indefinite future. It may be unwise to make that judgment at this stage.

As a number of hon. Members said, the ceasefire progressed during the winter months when one would not expect much military conflict and, as spring approached, so the fighting resumed. It is worth remembering, however, that fighting has not resumed throughout Bosnia and is still extremely limited.

Like many hon. Members who have visited Bosnia, each time that I have been in that country over the past three years, I have experienced a further extension of the area that is slowing returning to normality. A year and a half ago, one saw not just conflict between Serbs and Bosnian Government forces but an equally savage civil war between Croats and Muslims in central Bosnia. Now, the area of the country where British troops are most concentrated is overwhelmingly peaceful.

It will not necessarily remain so, but, for the past year, when one has travelled from Croat to Muslim area, one has not even seen military patrols on the borderline between Croat and Muslim communities, as was the feature of the countryside even 12 months ago.

Although British forces in Gorazde are in an area of great tension, the vast majority are carrying out crucial tasks in a large part of Bosnia that has seen no conflict for a year or 18 months but which would have to anticipate a dramatic and devastating return to conflict if the UN pulled out and thereby created or precipitated a very serious vacuum of power.

Obviously, withdrawal may become necessary. As my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary told the House clearly, we cannot afford to contemplate a situation in which our troops cannot carry out the tasks imposed on them, and in which they are used as a target by any of the competing factions. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South objects to the word "faction", but, whatever word one uses, all the separate groups within Bosnia have seen the United Nations as a legitimate target on certain occasions. That would be intolerable if it developed as some people predict.

The House has acknowledged the great gallantry of British troops in Bosnia. I thank the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) for the justified remarks that he made about several of the individual soldiers serving in Bosnia, especially the gallant colonel who has been the first recipient of the conspicuous gallantry cross, a new recognition of a very—[HON. MEMBERS: "Corporal."] I am sorry; I thank the House for that correction. It would no doubt be deserved, but the citation for that gallant soldier fully recognises the dangers confronted by British and other UN troops in the most difficult of circumstances.

The conclusion of the Government—and I suspect of the whole House—at this moment is that the United Nations presence in Bosnia continues to be justified. Although the work being done is difficult and often receives precious little thanks—including from those who benefit from it—we can nevertheless take great pride in it. I pay tribute to those who have made it possible.

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

*Ordered,*

That, at the sitting on Monday 15th May, the Speaker shall put the Questions on the Motions in the name of Mr. John M. Taylor relating to the draft Conditional Fee Agreements Order and Regulations 1995 not later than one and a half hours after the first such Motion has been made; and the said Motions may be entered upon and proceeded with, though opposed, after Ten o'clock.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

## Punjab (Treatment of Sikhs)

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

10 pm

**Mr. Terry Dicks** (Hayes and Harlington): I wish to bring to the attention of the House the continuing persecution of the Sikhs living in their homeland, the Punjab—an issue that I have brought before the House on three previous occasions in the 12 years that I have been a Member of Parliament.

I noticed that nearly 30 hon. and right hon. Members were in the Chamber to listen to a debate about Bosnia, in which British people are not really interested because it is not of direct concern. We now have a debate—at least, a statement—about the position in a Commonwealth country, and the 30 people who were in the Chamber at 10 o'clock have almost all left. I find that surprising and disappointing.

Sikhs in my constituency and throughout the world are worried for relatives and friends who continue to live in that part of India. The rape of young women, the beating of old men and the murder of young boys, together with the imprisonment without trial of thousands of innocent people, have been taking place for more than a decade and continue to this day.

Living in fear is part of everyday existence in Punjab. The freedom that we take for granted in Britain does not exist in that part of India.

Recent evidence obtained from police files shows that bodies of police suspects murdered in police custody have been cremated as "unclaimed" and that that practice has continued since 1984. The documents that I have with me were given by or bought from police authorities in the Punjab. They list names of people relating to the bodies that have been cremated; yet the Indian authorities denied the existence of such records.

The *Indian Express* carried a front-page story in its edition of 3 February 1995, in which it said that, during the three years 1991-93, the Punjab police dumped about 426 bodies for cremation as "unclaimed" on the Patti Municipal Committee. In many cases, the relatives had not been informed even though the bodies had been identified.

In the same region last year, another 17 "unclaimed" bodies were sent by the police for cremation. Why cremation? Because burnt bodies cannot be examined later for evidence of torture or other abuse.

Police sources have disclosed that, although some of those so-called "missing persons" may have died as a result of torture while in police custody, others may have been eliminated because they had some evidence of police brutality—in other words, they had witnessed what was going on, and they had to be put away together with those who were murdered as suspects.

A local human rights group brought that position to the attention of the Indian high court, but its action was dismissed on the grounds that only relatives of murdered individuals could be party to any litigation. That approach is a bit like telling the relatives of Kuwaitis who disappeared during the occupation of Kuwait to apply to the Iraqi high court in Baghdad for an inquiry to be held into their disappearance.

Investigations into allegations of police torture are rare and, even when such allegations have been established, prosecutions have not taken place. According to recent reports by Amnesty International, there is no evidence of a police officer having been convicted of human rights violations in Punjab. That says it all about the so-called free and democratic nature of that place and the police reaction to law and order.

The British Parliament has refused to condemn the behaviour of the Indian Government, no matter how well documented the facts are. The Government refuse, supposedly because India is a powerful Commonwealth country. Indeed, India refers to itself as the "largest democracy in the world". Perhaps the phrase the "largest hypocrisy" is more appropriate; it is one that I use frequently to describe that Government and that country. The Labour party, with its close links with the Congress party and the Gandhi family, prefers to say nothing at all—I suppose that that is par for the course for that party.

Abuses elsewhere, such as in Bosnia and in parts of the Soviet Union, have led to condemnation by our Government. Why have the Indian Government escaped Britain's wrath? If the Indian Government have nothing to hide, what are they attempting to cover up? Why will they not grant me a visa to enter the country? I reiterate my offer to the Indian Government; if my Sikh friends are telling me lies, I will condemn them outright upon my return from Punjab; on the other hand, if the Indian Government have been misleading the rest of the world, I will shout the facts from the rooftops upon my return to Britain.

With such a reasonable offer available, perhaps the Government and my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs will seek to persuade the Indian Government to grant me a visa. I sincerely hope that they will. As the elected representative of some 8,000 Sikhs, I believe that it is important that I see the position for myself. I hope that, with the help of the Foreign Office, I shall gain access to that country.

Recognition of the rights of Sikhs who are living in Punjab is all that Sikhs elsewhere want. That means the right to press for self-determination and to strengthen the call for an independent Kalistan. Sikhs cannot understand how Britain, which is their mother country in some ways, can take such determined action against the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and yet stand by and do nothing about human rights abuses in India. They wonder why they are treated differently, but they are also aware that Punjab is not an oil-rich region. Our Government give the impression that they are being selective in their opposition to human rights abuses. If that impression is to change, our Government must condemn outright the behaviour of the Indian Government.

There should be no aid programme to India, particularly because aid is now tied to good human rights practices. If that is the case, how can we give a penny to the Indian Government which use and abuse the Punjabi people in their own country? If that has no effect, I believe that our Government should break off all diplomatic ties with India. Perhaps the "curry club" lunches between hon. Members in the House and the people who represent the Indian Government should also come to an end. There can be no appeasement of a Government who treat one of their ethnic minority groups in that way.

We are now celebrating the end of the second world war—a war that was fought to preserve freedom of expression, freedom from tyranny and freedom of self-determination. In Punjab there is no freedom of expression, only its restriction. In Punjab there is no freedom from tyranny, only the fear of tyranny. In Punjab there is no freedom of self-determination, only the ability to whisper the word "Kalistan", because to do otherwise would put lives at risk.

For Sikhs in Punjab, we should read Muslims in Kashmir. Who is causing their suffering? It is none other than the Indian Government. The Sikhs in Punjab and the Muslims in Kashmir turn to us for help. They believe in the democratic principles upon which our Parliament is based. How much longer must they suffer and how many more excuses will be found to justify ignoring their pleas?

As I said earlier, this is the fourth time that I have raised the issue on the Floor of the House of Commons. I suspect that, for the fourth time, my hon. Friend will read a Foreign Office brief and that no further action will be taken. I suspect that there will be no effort to help me to secure a visa to visit India. I suspect that the Government will not raise the issue of human rights with the Indian Government and that they will not consider doing away with the aid programme because of the abuse of human rights in India. I shall probably hear—with great respect to my hon. Friend—platitudes and no firm decisions.

There are about 300,000 Sikhs in this country. The 8,000 Sikhs in my constituency will want to know how Parliament can spend hours talking about Bosnia—which is of no concern to this country in any shape or form; the Balkans were never part of the Commonwealth—yet can debate this very important issue for half an hour four times in 12 years. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) has many Sikhs in his constituency, so I now give way to him to say whatever he wants to say.

10.8 pm

**Mr. Jacques Arnold** (Gravesham): I am extremely grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) for raising this very important subject. As he said, many thousands of Sikhs live in Gravesend and Northfleet in my constituency. They are very concerned about their families and friends who remain in Punjab and many hundreds of my Sikh constituents travel to Punjab every year to visit them. They find the situation there to be extremely insecure.

In this country we take it for granted that human rights will always be preserved, and that if difficulties arise for ourselves and our families, in extremis we can turn to the police for help. Those are freedoms and rights not easily available to residents in Punjab. Not only are their families vulnerable to the depredations of the police but, if things go wrong and they are the victims of extortion or violence of any sort, they cannot have recourse to the police authorities, as should be their right.

What remains in Punjab is an extreme uneasiness for the individual, especially as there has been no proper investigation of the considerable number of cases of people who have disappeared over the years. Families throughout Punjab—and therefore, by extension, families in this country—have seen their members disappear. Justice does not ensue.

I know of a case of a constituent who—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris):** Order. As I understand it, this is an intervention.

**Mr. Arnold:** I am sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I thought my hon. Friend had finished: now I am not sure whether he has.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** No, I distinctly heard the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) say that he would give way.

**Mr. Dicks:** I am quite willing to allow my hon. Friend to finish what he has to say before I resume, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order. Let us have a little order here. First, I hope that the hon. Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) has the Minister's permission too. This is not something that can just be done off the cuff, on the spur of the moment. Does the hon. Member have the Minister's permission?

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tony Baldry):** I am perfectly content for my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham to intervene, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Has the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington finished his speech?

**Mr. Dicks:** If it helps, Mr. Deputy Speaker, yes.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** In that case, the hon. Member for Gravesham may speak.

**Mr. Arnold:** I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for clarifying the situation, because I thought that I was making a speech supporting my hon. Friend's admirable speech in his Adjournment debate.

I was saying that many of my constituents are concerned about the lack of follow-up to the disappearances that have occurred in Punjab, especially when young men from their extended families have disappeared. For instance, there was a ghastly case of a young man disappearing and all the stories were that he was being held in prison in a police station. The family was eventually advised that the young man had died in custody, yet only a few weeks later he was clearly seen at the window of the prison. When the case was pursued with the prison authorities and the place was eventually checked out, the young man had disappeared yet again.

With my Latin American experience, I know about the concerns about those who have disappeared in Argentina. In the last decade of the 20th century such dreadful things are still happening.

It is especially relevant to raise the matter in the House of Commons, because until 1947 the House was responsible for the conduct of affairs in India. In some ways the agreement made by Mountbatten with the successor authorities, especially Nehru and the Congress party, for the creation of India led to the current position. The great Sikh leaders of the day took at his word and at face value the promises that Mr. Nehru made them concerning the autonomy and the governance of greater Punjab, as it then was—promises that he subsequently broke.

*[Mr. Arnold]*

As a result of the haste with which we left India and of the lack of care taken at the time to ensure that the legitimate rights of the Sikhs were sustained, we have a responsibility.

The debate is especially relevant this week, because over the past weekend we have celebrated Victory in Europe day. While I was doing so in my borough of Gravesham, I met an elderly Sikh visiting from India, who told me how he had served as a sergeant-major with the British forces in Italy as part of the imperial Indian army under the Raj.

We owe a debt of gratitude to those people. We owe it to them to speak up for human rights in Punjab, so that they can live in peace in the land of their forefathers.

10.13 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tony Baldry):** My hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (Mr. Dicks) is and has been a robust champion of those of his Sikh constituents and others who have continuing concerns about the welfare of Sikhs in Punjab. I sincerely hope that the Indian authorities grant him a visa to travel to India. I cannot see that they have anything to lose by ensuring that everyone has access to see for themselves the situation in Punjab and elsewhere.

It is clearly an issue that raises broad concern in the House, as has been evidenced by the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) and the presence with me on the Front Bench of my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-East (Mr. Kirkhope), both of whom take a close interest in the welfare of the Sikh community here in the United Kingdom and overseas.

One reason why a Foreign and Commonwealth Office Minister is standing at the Dispatch Box answering on matters which are clearly the internal interest of another sovereign state is that large numbers of our fellow countrymen and women are Sikhs, who understandably take a close personal interest in the welfare and well-being of Sikhs throughout the world. The second reason for Ministers to become involved in the matter is human rights. Concern for human rights knows no national borders.

We take human rights issues extremely seriously. Serious abuses of human rights, wherever they may occur, such as summary execution, arbitrary imprisonment and torture, all deserve and will attract the condemnation of the House and the British Government. Hon. Members can rest assured that we shall continue to press for the strongest support for human rights throughout the world. Whenever we meet Ministers from countries where there are concerns about human rights violations, we draw attention to those concerns.

We should, however, be wary of absolutes, and of seeing things entirely in black and white. My hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington is a long-standing critic of the Government of India over many years. As he made clear, he has introduced a number of Adjournment debates on the matter, and his criticism of the Government of India has been sustained. That is matter for him. Clearly, my hon. Friend has not sought to temper his criticism in light of the guidance of "Erskine May" that

"opprobrious reflections must not be cast in debate on sovereigns and rulers over, or governments of, independent Commonwealth territories or countries in amity with Her Majesty.".

I am sure that it is understood by all who have taken a close interest in the matter over many years that, given his strong views on the matter, my hon. Friend has only "opprobrious reflections" for the Government of India. I appreciate that nothing is likely to deter him from his personal views on the matter.

Just as I promised to reflect carefully on everything that my hon. Friend said, so I ask my hon. Friend and the House to reflect whether the issues are quite as stark as he set out.

Until two years ago, the situation in the Punjab was unsatisfactory and unstable. There was widespread violence, with several thousand people being killed every year. We were concerned about the nature and level of human rights abuses there. Ministers, including my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary, discussed those concerns with the Indian Government on numerous occasions.

We emphasised to the Indian Government the need to respect human rights and the rule of law in confronting terrorism, and the importance of bringing those responsible for any wrongdoing to justice. We continue to make those points, not just in relation to Punjab. Concerns for human rights are a regular element in our discussions with the Indian Government at all levels.

At the same time, we have consistently condemned terrorism, which can offer no solution to the problems of Punjab or anywhere else. Atrocities committed by terrorists are as unacceptable as human rights abuses committed by security forces. It must be remembered that the Indian Government faced a serious challenge from terrorist violence in Punjab. In 1991 alone, it resulted in more than 5,000 deaths, including terrorist attacks on trains and buses, which were held up and innocent passengers gunned down and murdered.

We have always acknowledged and supported the right of the Indian Government to defend India against terrorist activities, and their responsibility to protect their citizens from terrorism.

**Mr. Dicks:** Will my hon. Friend confirm that the figures he quoted came from Indian Government sources?

**Mr. Baldry:** We have a high commission in India, which closely monitors reports of deaths in papers and from contacts and sources throughout India. I do not think that there is any doubt about the range and scale of the number of deaths that took place in 1991.

It is important to see developments in Punjab in perspective. There has been considerable progress since earlier Adjournment debates initiated by my hon. Friend. The situation now bears little resemblance to that of two years ago. The security situation has been transformed. There have been virtually no terrorist incidents this year, and terrorist activity has been severely curtailed, even if the potential for it has not been completely removed.

A key element in that new climate has been the creation of the Indian National Human Rights Commission. The Indian Government deserve credit for that. Although still a comparatively fledgling organisation, it has made an encouraging start in terms of casework and policy. The commission visited Punjab in April last year. Its report stated that there was

"near unanimity that terrorism has been contained"

and a

"widespread feeling that life in urban and rural areas has largely returned to normal".

The report concluded that changes in the situation on the ground should pave the way to normalising the role and function of the police, and re-establishing district magistrates' authority over them. That has since proved to be the case.

The newly established National Human Rights Commission has also challenged the constitutional validity of the controversial Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act—TADA. That was first introduced in 1985 to deal with the exceptional situation in Punjab, but it is in force throughout India. The central Government have recognised the need to prevent the abuse of that legislation. The Indian Home Minister told Parliament last year that he had asked all Chief Ministers to review TADA cases and to ensure that there was no suggestion of innocent people being harassed by the local authorities.

The Home Ministry has also reminded state governments that TADA was enacted to deal with terrorism, and was not to be used for political purposes. TADA cases are now kept under review by a high-level committee chaired by the Home Minister. He has said that he intends to visit the capital of every state in the union where people are detained under TADA, to ensure that those powers are not being abused.

Of course, it must be in the interests of India and all those concerned for India that all possible objective mechanisms are available to investigate and deal with any complaints of human rights abuses. That is why we have to continue to urge the Government of India to allow greater access by the International Committee of the Red Cross and Amnesty International to areas such as Punjab.

We have consistently encouraged the Indian authorities to allow international human rights groups and other international observers to visit areas where human rights abuses have taken place. Amnesty International visited Bombay last year. I understand that it is discussing further visits with the Indian Government. I hope that those will include a visit to Punjab.

Just as important as the improvements in promoting human rights is the fact that the democratic process is now fully operational, right down to grass roots level. Participation in elections has risen steadily during the past three years. State elections were held on 19 February 1992. The Congress (I) party won 12 of the 13 seats, but the turnout was only 28 per cent., reflecting a boycott by the Akali Dal parties. The first municipal elections in 13 years were held on 6 September 1992, just seven months later, and there voter turn-out increased dramatically, to 71 per cent. The largest number of seats went to independent candidates.

The move towards the restoration of political normality was further confirmed by the rural elections in 1993. Just under a year after the state elections, voter turnout was an emphatic 82 per cent. Since January 1993, there has been a further parliamentary by-election in May 1993; and again in September 1994, block and district level elections were held for the first time in 19 years. That is impressive evidence both of the Indian Government's determination to restore the democratic process to Punjab at all levels, and the desire of the people of Punjab fully to participate in their own governance, as evidenced by the involvement of the Akali Dal parties.

Those figures provide a clear indication that the majority in Punjab have rejected violence. Other figures confirm it. The number of monthly deaths has shown a clear and steady decline. Violence has reduced significantly and consistently since 1993. From several thousand deaths in 1992, there were only 394 in 1993, and less than 100 last year. That improving trend is continuing into 1995. So far this year, I am glad to say that there have been no deaths as a result of militant activity.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington mentioned Khalistan. We are aware of calls by some Sikh groups for a separate state of Khalistan, but it has to be remembered that not all Sikhs want to see the break-up of India. India is a democracy. To be credible, calls for a separate state should be debated within the constitutional and democratic means available for that purpose. The Indian Government have the right to seek to uphold the territorial integrity of India.

There is other evidence of Punjab's return to stability. The process of law is reasserting itself after years of acquiescence in the face of intimidation, and the courts have intervened on behalf of a number of detainees via habeas corpus proceedings. Economic life has also largely returned to normal. Punjab is traditionally India's most prosperous state. Once again, industrial and agricultural endeavour is flourishing, factories are resuming production, and people are going about their business without hindrance.

**Mr. Dicks:** If all those things are happening, as my hon. Friend says, because terrorism has reduced, why is police brutality still in the ascendancy? As I understand it, there are no signs whatever of such brutality easing. If terrorism is easing—I am delighted that it is, because I share my hon. Friend's view that it has no part to play—why is police brutality not following the same pattern?

**Mr. Baldry:** I am not quite sure on what basis my hon. Friend makes his allegations. Clearly, if there are allegations of police brutality, such matters would need to be progressed through the courts in India. It is quite clear that the courts are not slow to take action where they think that it is appropriate. Action may also be taken through the mechanism of the new National Human Rights Commission.

As I shall make clear in a moment, the state of Punjab is also contemplating introducing its own local human rights commission. So there is no lack of willingness on the part of India in general, or Punjab in particular, to ensure that any violations of human rights are examined fully and in detail.

The media also have a part to play. The attention of the press and the wider media is no longer monopolised by terrorism, and they are returning to their usual functions, and subjecting the Government's conduct to close scrutiny. Coverage of issues such as corruption, unemployment, price rises, power shortages, and, indeed, human rights issues, has resumed.

Of course much still needs to be done in Punjab, but the clear trend is towards the re-establishment of the rule of law and respect for human rights. The Chief Minister of Punjab has agreed to give favourable consideration to establishing a state human rights commission under the terms of the Indian Human Rights Act 1993.

The national context is also important. The treatment of detainees by law enforcement authorities remains a problem in India, but there has been a definitive change in the Indian Government's attitude towards human rights.

*[Mr. Baldry]*

They are taking seriously the international concerns expressed—by ourselves among others—over India's human rights record. They have done more than take note: they have taken action.

As I said earlier, much remains to be done in Punjab, but the trend is encouraging. India is a democratic state. Its people are subject to the rule of law—a principle to which this country contributed significantly. Remedies against abuse of human rights or personal liberties are available within the Indian legal system. The new National Human Rights Commission shows signs of acting as a watchdog against unchecked abuse.

The Indian authorities will need to remain vigilant, as will the friends of India, for the sake of the people of Punjab and India's reputation abroad. The first helpful steps have been taken, however, and we must jointly ensure that we continue along the right road.

I referred to the Sikh community in this country. I should like to end with an important consideration. Of 800,000 people of Indian origin who have made their home in Great Britain, the Sikhs are the largest group, totaling more than 300,000 people. They have made a valued contribution to many areas of our national life. They are inventive, industrious and energetic. It is entirely fitting that my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington should express their concerns—as have other hon. Members—and seek to promote their legitimate interests.

There is a wider perspective. The Sikhs are part of the larger community of Indian origin in Britain. That community as a whole, as we can say from experience in so many of our constituencies, makes a significant and increasingly important contribution, not only to the life of this country, but to our broader relationship with India. They are one of the foundations on which that relationship so solidly rests.

We must press the case of any individual part of this edifice in a way which does not damage the whole. It is vital, therefore, to maintain this twin perspective. The need to argue—

*The motion having been made after Ten o'clock, and the debate having continued for half an hour,* MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

*Adjourned accordingly at half-past Ten o'clock.*

# House of Commons

*Wednesday 10 May 1995*

*The House met at Ten o'clock*

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

## Mental Illness

*Motion made and Question proposed*, That this House do now adjourn—[*Mr. Kirkhope.*]

10.4 am

**Mr. John Marshall** (Hendon, South): The tradition in debates in this House is that one begins by declaring an interest. I declare an interest in that I am a member of the advisory council of the Jewish Association for the Mentally Ill, although I suspect that I receive much more advice than I give.

This debate is in the interest of the thousands of mentally ill individuals who are inadequately treated under the present system; of parents who see their sons and daughters suffer and, all too often, cannot influence the psychiatrists who treat them; of preventing the avoidable suicides and murders which take place because of failures in treatment.

I last raised the subject of the mentally ill in an Adjournment debate in December 1993. Although I have been silent in the House on the matter since then, I have frequently written to Ministers questioning the principles of the Government's policy, and have pointed out to the relevant authorities a number of individual cases where treatment has been inadequate.

The backdrop to the debate in 1993 was a local tragedy. In the summer of 1993, I attended the funeral of a constituent. There is nothing unusual about Members of Parliament doing that, but in that case I was attending the funeral of a 24-year-old constituent who had been receiving psychiatric treatment for some time. His mother had frequently written to me saying that the treatment was inadequate. I had written many letters to the psychiatrist and others trying to help him, saying that the care in the community that he was receiving was inadequate, that his mother knew her son much better than any psychiatrist did, and that the psychiatrists should listen to the mother.

They did not listen to the mother, and eventually, that 24-year-old boy dropped from the sixth floor of a building in my constituency and committed suicide. The death of a young man, which could have been avoided, is a galling experience which I shall always remember—the day life was tragically cut short because experts would not listen to a parent who knew much more about her child than they did.

During the eight years in which I have been a Member of this House, I have attended only three debates on the mentally ill, two of which, including this morning's, I have instigated. Since the debate in December 1993, a raft of reports has suggested that the care in the community policy is failing many of those whom it seeks to help.

In February 1994, we had a report into the murder of Jonathan Zito by Christopher Clunis. One must remember that Christopher Clunis had passed through the hands of 150 doctors, nurses, social workers and policemen, and had been into 14 hospitals, prisons and hostels, yet he was in the community and able to kill an innocent individual in London.

Another report in April 1994 said:

"Thousands of the mentally ill are relying on variable, patchy and under-funded services."

In August 1994, it was pointed out that more than half of the 22 people who had killed an innocent individual after discharge into the community had refused to take the drugs that they had been prescribed, or to attend treatment.

In September 1994, the Department of Health's mental health task force referred to

"a serious problem of emergency access to appropriate care for severe mentally ill people."

In September 1994, the Mental Health Foundation said:

"some services, particularly acute hospitals in inner cities are under such pressure that proper discharge planning of any sort is an unattainable dream."

The Royal College of Psychiatrists produced a report in 1994, in which it said:

"It is common for there to be no admission beds at all, available in the South of England. In these circumstances patients . . . may have to be nursed for 24 or even 36 hours in a room in an accident and emergency department while doctors or nurses make numerous phone calls to locate a bed, often at a hospital many miles outside London. There have been instances where suicidal or dangerous patients have absconded while waiting and others where patients, who would have accepted voluntary admission to their local unit, have had to be compulsorily admitted because they did not wish to go to the distant hospital."

The report concluded:

"It would be difficult to argue that to admit a London resident to a hospital on the south coast is any advance from the days when such patients would have been admitted to the large psychiatric hospitals that ringed London".

More recently, in April 1995, the Royal College of Psychiatrists reported:

"'True' bed occupancy was very similar to that in"

its previous survey—123 per cent. It said that that figure was

"accounted for by the fact that 189 people who should have been in London admission beds were inappropriately placed elsewhere.

102 of the 189 people . . . had to be admitted to distant hospitals because of bed shortages."

That emphasises the fact that in London there is a shortage of beds in mental hospitals. Surely that should guide Government policy in future.

The Royal College of Psychiatrists also said:

"Violent incidents (mainly assaults on staff and other patients) are very common on psychiatric admission wards. 131 incidents were reported during the week of the census, 47"

of which

"had resulted in some injury."

The policy of closing large mental institutions by the year 2000 was instituted by Mr. Enoch Powell in 1961. It is ironic that that gentleman, who made his economic fame by attacking long-term or even short-term economic planning, should, as Minister of Health, have indulged in a policy of mega-long-term planning in deciding in 1961 what should be done by the year 2000. In the early 1960s, there were 140,000 beds in mental institutions; today there are 20,000.

*[Mr. John Marshall]*

The Powell thesis was fundamentally misguided. It was a reaction to the excessive incarceration, in the 1940s and 1950s, of people in mental hospitals who should never have been there. However, the fact that some people were wrongly admitted in the 1940s and 1950s was no reason to decide in 1961 that no one would need to be admitted into large mental hospitals in the year 2000, or indeed in the year 1996.

There is no doubt, to my mind, that the pendulum, which swung too far in the 1940s, has swung back too far in the opposite direction. Self-evidently, many of those who were in mental hospitals in 1961 should not have been there, because they have subsequently managed to cope by living in the community. However, it is equally true, and it is visible to anyone looking round London today, that some people cannot cope in the community and should be in an asylum.

That would be better for them. Their quality of life would be better. It would be far better for their families, who worry about what is happening to their sons and daughters, wives and husbands, and it would be better for society at large.

I recently sent several letters to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis), questioning the adequacy of the number of beds in London. There is a great deal of apocryphal evidence to suggest that I am right, and that some of the statisticians in the Department of Health are wrong. There are too many examples of patients being released prematurely, and of others having difficulties securing admission.

It is equally true that, just as there is a shortage of beds in the hospitals, there is a shortage of beds in the community. The shortage of beds in hospitals encourages the premature discharge of mental patients, and I am afraid that it is sometimes compounded by professional misjudgments.

I shall always remember one of my earliest surgeries. A large deputation came to visit me from one of the council estates in my constituency, and I wondered what the council had done. The people said, "It is Mr. Campbell," so I wanted to know whether he was the caretaker. They said, "Oh no, nothing like that. Mr. Campbell has just been admitted into the N block, and he has just come out of hospital."

I asked what the problem was. They said, "He has been discharged from a mental hospital and he does only one thing—he plays music. The trouble is that he starts at 8 o'clock at night and finishes at 8 o'clock in the morning. We are all trying to sleep when he is playing his music, and when he is not playing his music we are trying to work."

I wrote to the hospital. On that occasion they admitted that Mr. Campbell needed to go back into hospital, and he was taken back, but probably he should never have been released into the community.

The care in the community policy rests on the paradox that people are told that they are sufficiently fit to live in the community, but they are sufficiently unwell to need medication—and thoroughly nasty medication to boot. None of us like to take nasty medicine. I always remember that, as a child, when I had a severe illness during the war and I was given very nasty medicine, I once asked my mother, "Why don't you try the medicine?" She took it. I then said to her, "You have taken it today. I don't need to take it." She gave me a short shrift answer that that was not a logical response, and I agree with her in retrospect.

None of us likes to take nasty medicine, and most of those people who have been buoyed up by discharge into the community believe that they no longer need to take the nasty medicine. That is when they regress. That is when they become violent. That is when they sometimes lose their general practitioner. That is when they become aggressive to other people. That is when they end up in prison.

It is surely wrong that someone should be discharged into the community because it is thought that they are unsuitable for institutional care, and then end up in another institution—a prison.

**Mr. Oliver Heald** (Hertfordshire, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that there are people living in the community perfectly satisfactorily and taking drug therapy regularly, and that they now have a freedom that they would never have had if they had remained in one of the large institutions? Surely the key is that those people should be adequately supervised.

**Mr. Marshall:** My hon. Friend has anticipated the next part of my speech, when I was going to discuss the Government proposals for supervised discharge.

One of the other ironies of care in the community is that many of the people who have been released into the community end up sleeping rough. I shall always remember one of my first constituency engagements, in, I think, September 1987, when I visited the National Schizophrenia Fellowship. I asked one of the members, "What is your problem?" and she explained that her daughter was schizophrenic. I asked where her daughter was, and she replied, "She is sleeping on a park bench somewhere in London tonight." If one talks to them, one discovers that a significant number of the people who will sleep rough in London tonight are people who have been released from mental hospitals throughout the capital.

Some people criticise the Government's power of supervised discharge in the Mental Health (Patients in the Community) Bill—which will shortly receive a Third Reading in another place, and will shortly thereafter come to this place—on civil liberty grounds, but those who do so are, I believe, making a completely flawed argument. That argument assumes that someone who is sufficiently troubled to need psychiatric help is sufficiently sane to decide rationally about his treatment. The protection of one person's civil liberties may well mean that they are denied to someone else.

Those who criticise supervised discharge ignore the fact that many of those who are released into the community commit suicide. There is no doubt that the official figures understate the number of suicides committed by released schizophrenics. The courts will take account of the religious susceptibilities of those who may or may not have committed suicide, or recognise that the validity of a life insurance policy will be determined by the verdict reached by the coroner. The NSF estimates that between 300 and 500 released schizophrenic patients commit suicide each year.

When we talk about civil liberties, we must also remember the civil liberties of those adversely affected by current arrangements. Jayne Zito had the civil liberty to

expect that her husband would not be killed. Georgina Robinson, an occupational therapist, had the right to expect the civil liberty of being able to work in a mental care health centre without being killed by a patient. Ruth and John Gore's civil liberties should have meant that they were not hacked to death by their schizophrenic son. Jason Dalson's civil liberties should have meant that he was not killed by his mother at the age of 6.

Those are the civil liberties that we must remember. In each of those murder cases, the law recognised the concept of diminished responsibility when the individuals charged went to court and pleaded guilty to manslaughter rather than to murder. Is it not right to recognise the concept of diminished responsibility before a crime is committed rather than after?

One of the ironies behind the problem is that the strongest advocates of supervised discharge are the relatives of those affected. They do not believe that such discharges would affect their son's, daughter's, husband's or wife's civil liberties. They believe that it is essential that the discharge of their relatives should be better supervised than it is now, so that those relatives can enjoy a better quality of life.

One of my concerns about the treatment of the mentally ill is the attitude of GPs. I am sure that virtually every colleague in the House has received more than one letter from one of my constituents. That lady is convinced that her telephone is being tapped; that her mail is being intercepted; that foreigners are coming into her home whenever she is out of it; and that Mossad and the Japanese—a strange combination—are after her. It is rather odd that both of them should be after the same innocent lady living in Hendon.

I visited that constituent at her home. She saw me outside first and said that everything I said would be recorded by bugs. I went into the house to look for those bugs, but could not see any. She pointed to where the intruders had come in, and showed me where they had left their mark. In fact, she had metal windows, and the mark was rust. I asked that poor lady who her doctor was. Her initial reaction was to say that she did not need a psychiatrist, but I then discovered the identity of her GP. I have pestered the man to try to do something about that poor lady but he has done nothing.

I could spend the next hour recounting other similar examples, but I know that other colleagues, such as my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton), want to take part in the debate. My hon. Friend the Minister should try to ensure that GPs are better educated about the problems of mental health, and show a greater willingness to do something about it.

As I have already said, I am a member of the advisory council of JAMI. It has encountered problems with two local authorities in London. The London borough of Barking and Dagenham has written to say:

"The value of JAMI is recognised".

Mr. X

"is seen to benefit from his contact with you. However, I regret that my efforts to secure funding have not been successful".

JAMI has been asked to carry on that beneficial treatment, but will be given no money for it by that London borough. The London borough of Ealing, with which I used to be associated, has refused to give any funds to the course of treatment and support that JAMI has been giving to one of its residents, because it feels that, although the treatment was helpful, the gentleman concerned would not need residential care if he did not get it. It has therefore decided to give nothing towards that treatment.

We need a change of emphasis in our treatment of the mentally ill. Mental health needs to cease to be the Cinderella of the health service. I should like the Minister to announce a moratorium on further hospital closures until adequate alternative services are in place. The bulldozer must stop: the destruction of existing hospitals must cease. We should construct new, smaller mental hospitals and provide better facilities in the community. Hospitals must not disgorge patients into the community when they are unable to provide them with adequate treatment.

The Royal College of Nursing has made it clear that

"there are grave concerns that the closures of psychiatric institutions have not been offset by sufficient alternative support and treatment in the community. There is an increasing body of evidence which exposes the inability of the current aftercare arrangements to meet the needs of people with serious mental health problems."

I should like the Minister to make it clear that the Government recognise the need for more community psychiatric nurses. At present, about 4,000 psychiatric nurses treat 180,000 schizophrenics. Many of those schizophrenics may not be attached to a particular psychiatric nurse, but each nurse has a case load of about 55 clients. That means that she—or he: one must not be sexist—can see each client for about half an hour a week. I do not believe that that time necessarily provides the right amount of treatment. The Royal College of Nursing has certainly said that it believes that the number of psychiatric nurses should be more than doubled.

The professions concerned should recognise that they should pay more attention to the views of the parents and relatives of those suffering from mental illness. On 18 January 1995, *The Independent* stated:

"The time has come to jettison an Act which neither protects the public effectively nor provides the care which seriously mentally disordered people require to achieve a more fulfilled and happier life."

That single sentence underlines the nub of what I have said, at greater length. Were that recommendation met, it would fulfil the needs of the country.

10.27 am

**Mr. Richard Spring** (Bury St. Edmunds): I am grateful for the opportunity to take part in this debate. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) on securing the debate, and on putting his argument so coherently.

When "The Health of the Nation" was published in July 1992, handbooks on different key areas were also published. What struck me about the handbook on mental illness was the revelation that 18,000 people die from mental illness, directly or indirectly, but most notably from suicide.

It is true to say that this generation has stopped trying to sweep the issue of mental disability under the carpet. That happened before, greatly to our shame, but we now recognise that mental illness affects people across the nation. It is fair to say that there is not a family in the land that has not been struck, directly or indirectly, by some form of mental illness, temporary or permanent.

People have phobias, anxieties, compulsive eating disorders and more serious conditions, such as schizophrenia. All those conditions cause immense

*[Mr. Richard Spring]*

distress to the families and friends of sufferers. Almost 90 per cent. of those who commit suicide suffer from mental disorders. No fewer than 66 per cent. of suicides consulted general practitioners within the month leading up to their suicide, and 40 per cent. consulted their GPs in the previous week.

Just over a year ago, I initiated a debate in the House as a result of an experience in my constituency. My attention was drawn to a truly tragic case of a young lady with behavioural problems who fell between all of the stools of the mental health process. She was not defined as psychiatrically unwell, so she could not be treated. It was believed that she suffered from a behavioural problem, and a psychiatrist told me that the criminal justice system was the only route for her to follow.

That young lady suffered from an illness, whether behavioural or psychiatric, which prompted her to cause damage to herself, and which created fear within her family and in the community. As a result of that case, I have become particularly interested in the area of mental health, and I have been moved by the plight of those who are affected by such problems, and that of their families.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South said, many mental health beds have been removed from the national health service. However, some 80,000 beds remain, both on a daily or permanent care basis, for those who suffer from mental afflictions. In the past decade, the number of clearly mentally distressed people who are living rough has increased throughout the industrialised world. It is significant that the Homeless Network's audit of rough sleepers found that 91 per cent. of those in that unhappy situation had one or more special needs, and that one in three suffered from mental health problems.

The homeless mentally ill initiative was introduced almost five years ago in order to provide specialist psychiatric accommodation for those with mental health needs in London. It has addressed, at least in part, that particularly worrying problem which affects not only the individual sufferers but all those who live in London. I certainly share my hon. Friend's view that communities feel threatened as a result of well-publicised cases of mentally ill people who have been released into the community prematurely.

**Mr. Nigel Evans** (Ribble Valley): Three large institutions are located in my constituency, two of which have virtually closed, and the other will close in five years. Does my hon. Friend agree that the concept of care in the community is absolutely correct? The scheme costs twice as much money as the old Victorian system, but we must ensure that those who need help can receive it.

There have been a number of highly publicised cases of people who were released into the community, who are sleeping rough and who are suffering as a result of deficiencies in the current system. As a consequence, the whole care in the community system is suffering also. Does my hon. Friend believe that we should target more resources at the small number of people who are now falling between two stools in the health service, in order to ensure that the care in the community system receives the credit it deserves?

**Mr. Spring:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for putting his point of view so eloquently. I will examine the effect of the proposed new legislation, and I shall also inform my hon. Friend how we are trying to address the problems in Suffolk. I believe that we must reassure the public about this matter. The situation is akin to the public's reaction to crime: statistics may be falling, but the fear of crime is extremely damaging to people's sense of well-being.

I hope that the Mental Health (Patients in the Community) Bill will address some of the legitimate concerns that have been raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans) and other colleagues. My hon. Friends the Member for Ribble Valley and for Hendon, South have asked what level of supervision is adequate to deal with the problems of individuals and to provide proper comfort to the communities and to the families which are blighted by mental illness.

A supervised discharge will be required for those who leave hospital after having been detained under the Mental Health Act 1983. The new legislation will also tighten up provisions for returning to hospital those patients who go absent without leave. The period wherein patients can be recalled will be extended from six to 12 months. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State elaborated on the legislation in a press notice of 12 August 1993, in which she said:

"Under supervised discharge, patients would be subject to conditions, including a treatment plan negotiated with them and their carers, and a requirement to attend for treatment. A named key worker would be immediately responsible for that patient's care. He or she must ensure that the procedures agreed in advance are followed and that decisive action is taken if the patient does not co-operate".

We know of well-publicised tragic cases that have horrified and touched the heart of the nation. Therefore, the safety of the public must be uppermost in our minds. The supervised discharge arrangements, which I accept are a valuable advance in this area, include a treatment plan and an obligation to receive treatment. Any failure to do so will lead to a recall to hospital.

I hope that the my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Health will assure the House that hospital discharge procedures will be improved. It is also critical that the supervision register is monitored properly and adequately upon its introduction. Every year £2 billion is spent on mental health. The number of community health nurses has increased substantially, despite the pressures that my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South referred to. More psychiatrists and psychologists are involved in the national health service than ever before.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ribble Valley said that it was incumbent upon the health authorities to draw up proper care programmes for mentally ill people who are discharged from hospital. I contacted the Suffolk health authority to seek assurances that my county is undertaking such programmes. The authority is appointing a programme manager for mental health services to oversee the formulation of a programme, and I am pleased that that appointment is in the pipeline. The health authority is also introducing a number of other initiatives, including the improvement of acute in-patient services, and the provision of a consultant psychiatrist in Suffolk to examine proper rehabilitation procedures.

Community psychiatric nurses are providing an important new assessment service to individuals with mental health problems who are in police or court

custody. The link between the justice process and mental illness is inextricable, and the distinction is often unclear. The service began last month, and decisions will be made as to those who need treatment and those who should be punished. That distinction was blurred previously, and it was certainly not taken into account when I introduced my Adjournment debate.

The legislation in another place will advance the issue in a wholly constructive manner. However, my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South eloquently highlighted the remaining potential imbalance involving premature discharge and inadequate bed space for those who still require care. When the new procedures are introduced in the next year or two, we must monitor the situation carefully and compassionately. We have not struck the right balance over many decades. We are now moving in the right direction, but I believe that it is incumbent upon all hon. Members to watch the developments very carefully.

Of course we do not want monstrously large hospitals for the mentally ill. Specialists in the area have said that the best success can be obtained by developing smaller units, which are properly coordinated and humanely supervised. I hope very much that that will become increasingly the pattern in the next few years. We need a balance, and I hope that we are moving towards one. I am sure that we will need to monitor the situation carefully in the next few years.

10.39 am

**Dr. Jeremy Bray** (Motherwell, South): I congratulate the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) on calling for this debate, and on the manner in which he and the hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Mr. Spring) presented the problems.

Neither side of House has a monopoly of concern for mental illness. This sort of debate allows the concerns of hon. Members, based on our direct experience of the problems in our constituencies, to be properly drawn to the attention of the Minister, so that he can carry them into responsible action by his Department.

We can understand the pattern of care needed for the mentally ill if we distinguish between the different stages of a mental illness, and, indeed, the differences between individual cases, because such differences are enormous.

The stage at which a mental illness presents itself most dramatically can be at a patient's first appearance at an accident and emergency department, or, preferably, a specialised mental health clinic. It is the experience of many patients that an accident and emergency department is not a good environment for a mental patient first to contact the health service. There is enough trauma in an accident and emergency department in dealing with acute physical cases.

To introduce a distressed mental patient into such an environment causes chaos in the department, and is unfair on the medical staff and on other patients, who desperately need attention but cannot get it because the whole place is disrupted by the behaviour of a mental patient.

However, if a 24-hour specialised emergency clinic open 365 days a year is available—as there has been for some years at the Maudsley hospital in London—the staffing and the expert care that can be given to mental patients provide an entirely different environment. It is still hugely distressing for the patient—that is unavoidable—but nevertheless it is a quite different environment from that of the ordinary general district hospital accident and emergency department.

I understand that the clinic at the Maudsley is now available only to people living locally in the area covered by the hospital, rather than to the whole of London. If that is the case, it is a great pity, and I hope that the scope of its service can be changed. We need such clinics in every major urban centre and city throughout the country, so that they are available to people in those desperate circumstances.

The greater proportion of patients presenting themselves for first care do not require emergency admission. However, some do, and they face a desperate situation in terms of the availability of beds. Dr. Paul Lelliott, who is the head of the research unit of the Royal College of Psychiatrists, recently carried out a survey of the availability of beds in London. He will present his report at 6 o'clock this afternoon at a meeting of the all-party mental health group, of which I am privileged to be the chairman.

The report found that not only was there not a single bed available in the whole of London on some occasions in January, but that there was a 23 per cent. shortage of beds for those patients who needed admission. It was not just a flash in the pan of one patient not being offered a bed. A 23 per cent. increase in the number of beds was needed to deal with the number of patients who required emergency admission under newly identified diagnoses in January.

**Mr. Nicholas Winterton** (Macclesfield): The hon. Member is making an extremely important point. Does he accept that the situation is compounded because of a number of cases in which people with mental illnesses have been brought before the courts? The courts would like to commit those people to mental hospitals for care and treatment, but cannot do so, because there are no beds. As a result, as my hon. Friend the Minister knows, those people are committed to prison, which is the last place where such people should be committed. We need extra beds—not in the future: we need them now.

**Dr. Bray:** Yes, indeed. The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right.

Beyond the shortage of beds, there is the question of what sort of beds. The hon. Member for Bury St. Edmunds pointed out the problem of beds becoming blocked up because hospitals do not have channels through which patients can be reasonably discharged, and because there is an inadequate support system in the community.

It has been proposed that hospitals should be allowed to run hostels, which can be a transitional stage for people returning to the community. Such hostels are run by several hospitals around the country for the physically ill, not the mentally ill. They work very well, and costs per bed in them are far lower than they are in the hospitals themselves. It would be possible considerably to ease the channels of discharge from mental hospitals if, under the control of the hospitals, there were hostel places where people could be accommodated as they got used to returning to the community.

People often do not have any circumstances in the community to which they can return. They do not have a house, or, if they have been allocated a council house,

*[Dr. Bray]*

there is no furniture. If it is minimally furnished, there is no community support. To construct all that apparatus of support takes time and organisation. It needs all the different support services to get together to create such apparatus for cases where the person has no family. A hostel can greatly ease that problem of transition.

There is also the need for continuing care. The supervised discharge proposals are concerned with cases where people who are mentally ill have attacked members of community. However, the number of suicides and cases of self-inflicted harm is far greater—10 times or more—than the number of people who are attacked by the mentally ill. Consequently, the greatest physical suffering is that of people who are mentally ill.

The Minister could confirm that forensic psychiatrists are not making a case for the expansion of their particular services. They tell me that their service is the best staffed part of psychiatric care services. The extreme cases that are looked after by the forensic psychiatrists are already the best provided for. I am not saying that the system has no problems to consider or that need working through, but its problem does not seem primarily to be that of resources. We therefore need to get public pressure and public concern about such cases properly directed and channelled into the organisation of the services and the balance of support in the community as a whole.

After moving on from the more intensive period of community care, there are the various forms of therapy and counselling which are needed to tackle some of the behavioural problems faced by patients. There is no unique therapy or counselling, but there are many cases in which it has been helpful to try out various channels in order to find the most appropriate type of counselling or the most suitable person. Because that has proved successful in many cases, it needs resources. The resources that could be absorbed by counselling and therapy are unlimited, but there should be channels through which people can feel their way through the services.

As well as the responsibilities of the Department of Health, other Departments—specifically Social Security and Employment—are also involved in a patient's return to the community and to work. I accept that there is good will on the part of the Departments concerned, but there is sometimes a lack of an appreciation of the nature of mental illness. The Department of Health must ensure that the various schemes produced by the other Departments are realistic for the mentally ill.

For example, a clear vital statistic in the performance of the disability working allowance, apart from the sums involved and the conditions under which it is paid, is the consideration of how likely it is that a mentally ill person returning to work will be able to sustain 40 or even 20 hours a week of consistent attendance for the indefinite future, or even for six months. There needs to be tolerance when a patient knows that it is best to stay at home and not risk going into work and provoking a crisis.

That is well understood by everybody concerned with mental health, but it does not fit easily into the structure of social security or a job placement scheme, which is concerned with people who, quite properly, need other encouragements and disciplines. We shall be debating how all that is put together when we consider the legislation about supervised discharge. The health service and the Department of Health must make a major contribution to the basic planning stage and the perception of the problem.

Hon. Members undoubtedly see many different types of case. It is a healthy sign that there is legislation going through the House now and that there is increasing concern by individual Members arising from work in their constituencies. It reflects a greater public sensitivity to the needs and problems of the mentally ill. The younger generation have a much deeper understanding of the problems of mental illness than some of their forebears. It is that concern, together with the relationships they form and the support they give in the community, that offers the best hope of care for the mentally ill in the future.

10.53 am

**Mr. Nigel Evans** (Ribble Valley): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon South (Mr. Marshall) on initiating this debate this morning.

I am extremely concerned about the good name of care in the community. We must do all we can to ensure that any deficiencies within the system are corrected as soon as possible. My hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Mr. Spring) talked about the high-profile cases in which people have fallen between two stools and are not receiving the proper care or supervision in the community. Some are not taking their tablets, are found wandering the streets at all times of the day and night, and are sleeping rough.

Those are the cases that the public see. They are not aware of the 99 per cent. of cases in which patients are receiving proper care. They see only the small number of cases, including the suicides, that make the newspapers. Therefore, the whole concept of care in the community is tainted. I am extremely concerned that we should do everything possible to ensure that the targeting of resources and help is aimed at those who are in need so that they receive proper care in the community.

As I said in an intervention, I had three large mental institutions in my constituency, which must be quite unusual. Brockhall has now closed, and is being taken over. No doubt the site will soon be turned into a housing estate. Whittingham will also close shortly. That institution is what everybody thinks of when they think of an old Victorian asylum. It has superb gardens, where the mentally ill can wander within the confines of the institution. The people outside the community never see those people, because they do not go into the hospital grounds unless they need to do so. Again, planning permission is being sought to turn that site into a housing development.

In a number of years, Calderstones, another large mental institution, will be closing. There will be a small unit on the site looking after those with extreme and difficult problems. Having said that, there are currently 600 people living there, who will all be discharged into the community. If one considers how many people were living in those three large mental institutions and who have now, over a short time, been discharged into the community, one can grasp the task that was before the Government in implementing this policy.

Many people have reservations about the speed at which all this has been done. They think that it should have been carried out more slowly. Some people, myself included, think that it has been more cruel than kind to

take people who have been institutionalised all their lives out of the large institutions and put them somewhere else. Do not get me wrong: I am not a defender of the large institutions; they were a mistake, and we have moved on. However, we must ensure that the resources are there, so that those who are discharged into the community receive the proper care.

**Mr. Nicholas Winterton** (Macclesfield): I was horrified by what my hon. Friend said about the closure of a number of institutions in his constituency. He said that some of the sites will be developed for housing. He said that Whittingham had superb grounds. Will my hon. Friend accept from me, having taken a deep interest in mental health over almost 20 years, that one of the treatments for those suffering from schizophrenia in particular is found in the environment in which they live and are being treated?

Is it not sad that those wonderful hospital grounds, many of them quite close to cities and town centres, and therefore very much part of the community, are being disposed of merely for the capital gain of housing development? If a smaller and more modern unit could be constructed on those sites to care for the mentally ill, the environment, which is so important for the treatment of some people with mental illness, could be retained.

**Mr. Evans:** I accept everything that my hon. Friend says. The grounds at Whittingham are large, and it is appropriate in certain circumstances to have that sort of atmosphere and quietude. That institution is on the outskirts of Preston. Some of the high-profile cases involve people who have been in that environment but who are now wandering the streets of Preston. That must be wrong.

I know that, with the redevelopment of Whittingham, a new unit will be put on that site. I hope that sufficient grounds are kept aside within the development, so that people are able to enjoy the quietude and the asylum, away from the noise and the grind of everyday living.

**Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** Get a commitment from the Minister.

**Mr. Evans:** I know that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Health, the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) has been to Calderstones in my company. I was there only a few weeks ago, taking a look at the good work that was being done, particularly with people with learning disabilities. My hon. Friend will know of the good work and commitment of the staff who work at such institutions. One of my concerns is that the spread of people going into the community will mean that there are insufficient numbers of adequately trained experts to deal with the problems.

**Lady Olga Maitland** (Sutton and Cheam): I thank my hon. Friend for giving way—he has touched on some valuable points.

Does he agree that we should be carefully considering another category of patients? We need to consider not just those who have been sectioned and come out of hospital, but those who are vulnerable and who do not quite qualify for being sectioned, but who desperately need supervision so that they do not harm themselves and others.

**Mr. Evans:** I agree with my hon. Friend. That is exactly what we need. Those people do not necessarily need large institutions; they need smaller institutions, with sufficient grounds, so that they are not any danger to themselves or other people.

Whittingham has a tradition of looking after people with mental illness, to which a stigma is attached. Mental illness is something that one does not talk about. The people in Whittingham have grown up with the institution, and enjoy the fact that it exists in their area. The people with mental illness mix with the people in the village, and the position is a total reversal of the not-in-my-backyard syndrome—NIMBY. If one tried to set up such an institution in some districts, the residents would fight tooth and nail against it, but the people of Whittingham fought hard to retain the institution in their community, because they know and understand the problems that those people have.

The problem of people with mental illness being referred to prisons because there are insufficient beds available has already been mentioned, and it worries me. One of my constituents, whose son unfortunately has a mental illness, came to seem me a couple of weeks ago. He became involved in a crime; his parents say that he should not be on the streets, but receiving care, because of his problem. He is now in prison. He is not receiving the care that he needs.

At the end of his sentence, he will be released back into the community in no better shape—perhaps worse shape—than when he went in. We must ensure that sufficient beds are available for people who might become involved in crimes because of their illness, and we must ensure that those people receive the proper treatment they need.

**Lady Olga Maitland:** Does my hon. Friend agree that there is another problem: the shortage of longer-term beds? There is a danger that patients who return into the community enter the carousel system. They come out of hospital, after a period they are desectioned, they commit another offence and have to return to hospital. They never receive treatment in hospital for long enough—the required period could be six months, one year or even longer. The problem is that such people are released too soon.

**Mr. Evans:** I agree with my hon. Friend. Nothing can be more distressing to professionals than to see those with whom they have worked released into the community prematurely and being sent to prison because they have committed a crime, or falling into rough ways because they are not taking the tablets and are not being properly supervised. The process then has to start all over again.

I shall bring my remarks to a close, as I know that other hon. Members want to participate in what has been a useful debate. We need to target the resources at those who are not receiving the proper care in the community. Those who receive care in the community benefit from the small cluster homes, where they receive virtually one-to-one attention from the dedicated staff. We must ensure that they can benefit in future, and we must not throw the baby out with the bath water.

11.3 am

**Mr. Oliver Heald** (Hertfordshire, North): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) on instituting the debate.

*[Mr. Oliver Heald]*

I very much agreed with the hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) about the change in attitudes in our society in recent years. It is right to start by praising the policy of care in the community and the great strides that have been made in taking individuals who did not enjoy freedom out of asylums, so that they are now able to make their homes in the community. Such people have been de-institutionalised and are free to become part of the community and take up jobs—many of them responsible jobs—due to the new drugs and treatments that have become available. It is a tribute to the House and the Government that the change has been made, and has been largely successful.

When one makes such a change, one also has to manage it and deal with its effects. We must all accept that, in a tiny minority of cases, the failure to take drugs or to follow the care programme have led to disasters such as that involving Jonathan Zito, which has already been mentioned.

We must consider three issues. First, we must ensure that only those who are likely to co-operate with their care programme and with those trying to help them, and who take the drugs they need are discharged from hospital. The people who take the decision to discharge such patients should not be under pressure—be it financial pressure or the pressure to adhere to the convention or dogma that everyone can be treated in the community.

Secondly, we must ensure that everyone who is released from hospital is properly supervised, with proper accommodation and finance for that purpose. When the decision is being made as to whether to discharge a patient, proper account must be taken of the resources available. That may mean that somebody who could be released or discharged into the community purely on the basis of medical science if there were a huge input of resources and supervision, may not be discharged immediately because it is not possible to provide such support and supervision. The available resources must be taken into account when the decision is made as to whether to discharge a patient. There must be adequate supervision to protect the individual and the public.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South mentioned the Mental Health Task Force report. It stated:

> "Patients with severe and chronic mental disabilities are being discharged without adequate supervision, or the provision necessary to meet their housing, social and health needs. This could incur risks not only to public safety but also to the safety of the individuals concerned".

**Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** My hon. Friend is making an important point. Does he accept that, if someone is discharged from a mental illness hospital into the community, the person who is nominated to be in charge of that case—in charge of that person—should be medically qualified, because mental illness is a disease, not something that a social worker can properly supervise? Does my hon. Friend agree that the person nominated should always be medically qualified?

**Mr. Heald:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that point. A high level of expertise is needed. I am not an expert in social work and mental health—my hon. Friend knows far more about it than I do. There may be social workers who are so highly trained that they have more expert knowledge about care in the community than some of the doctors who deal with the specialty in hospital.

The important point is that hon. Members have responsibility for the public at large. We also have responsibility for those individuals. However, if there is a question of the safety of the public, the House should always err on the side of protecting the public, because the freedom of the public at large is always a high consideration for the House, and more important than an individual's freedom in such circumstances.

The hon. Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) said that the number of suicides was greater than the number of individuals who are attacked by former patients. That is not the right balance. It is vital that the public are protected.

**Lady Olga Maitland:** Will my hon. Friend give way?

**Mr. Heald:** No. I do not have time to give way.

The freedom of many individuals will be less if the public reach the point at which they are completely dissatisfied with the protection available to them.

If individuals are discharged into the community and they fail to co-operate, it is important that they are detained speedily and placed back in hospital. The Mental Health (Patients in the Community) Bill, with its provision for after-care supervision, taking to the House the power to effect a speedy readmission to hospital, is vital if the public are to be satisfied.

I hope that the Minister will tell us the current guidelines on the discharge of patients, and when the guide to co-operative working will be available.

11.10 am

**Mr. David Hinchliffe** (Wakefield): I congratulate the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) on initiating the debate. Other hon. Members have contributed sincere thoughts and concerns about the current situation relating to the care of the mentally ill. In particular, my hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) has a deep personal commitment to the issue, as chairman of the all-party mental health group.

As I listened to the debate, I had the feeling that one or two hon. Members were harking back to a golden age of the asylum that, frankly, never existed. Many years ago, as an authorised mental health officer, I had the misfortune, to some extent, to witness the system working. Some people who hark back to that system are thoroughly misguided, and do not appreciate exactly what it was all about. The process of moving from the 19th-century asylum system has rightly had all-party support over the past 30 years.

Public confidence in community care policy has been shaken in recent times. That has been due not only to some of the tragic cases that have been mentioned this morning, but to a much wider belief that the Government are more concerned with running down the existing system to save money than with developing an alternative system of community care.

In responding to public anxiety, the Government have been unable to answer two particularly important questions: first, in halving the number of psychiatric in-patients by 70,000 between 1982-83 and 1992-93, what has happened to the people leaving hospital? I have tabled

questions but received no answers. Secondly, what has happened to the public resources that have been released by the huge closure programme? They have clearly not been invested in alternative provision within the community.

Immediately before moves towards community care in the late 1950s, 15 per cent. of national health service expenditure was on mental health. Now it is about 11 per cent. Although there have rightly been important developments in community re-provision since that time, it comes nowhere near matching the 4 per cent. drop in expenditure that has occurred. Key elements in community care are missing in many sectors.

The central emphasis of many hon. Members' contributions this morning is to urge the provision of acute beds—urging asylum. I urge them to look at examples of asylum within the community. People do not have to be in parks miles from the public, locked in institutional care. Asylum exists within the community. There are safe houses, supported accommodation and sheltered environments in which people can be enabled to live without being in the old bin system that many of us, unfortunately, knew intimately.

It concerns the Labour party that, within community care, mental health appears to be the poor relation. The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy found that only 3 per cent. of the overall community care budget is spent on mental health. The Mental Health Foundation found that, of every pound spent on mental health services, 91p goes on NHS treatment, while the remaining 9p covers all community provision by local authorities and the private and voluntary sectors put together.

The public can see that the Government's mental health policy consists almost entirely of piecemeal initiatives, not a coherent thought-through strategy. That point was made not specifically but in general terms by hon. Members, including the hon. Member for Hendon, South. Each tragic incident, some of which have been referred to—I take them all very seriously—results in an ad hoc attempt to patch the holes in the care system, when it is clear that the system itself needs a thorough overhaul. I hope that the Government will respond to the points that were made by Conservative Members this morning.

The central issue that the Minister must address is the organisational framework of community care. When the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 was being debated in the House, I thought that it introduced a fundamental contradiction, especially in planning mental health services. Within the NHS, it introduced a competitive market in health, but alongside that was the requirement at local level to plan community care. The two elements were completely contradictory.

We have seen the result at local level, which has a bearing on some of the tragic cases that have been mentioned. The result has been the fragmentation of local provision, duplication in some instances, and gaps in provision, as has been mentioned by hon. Members. We must add to that the joker in the pack, which was not mentioned this morning—GP fundholding—which is undermining coherent planning in community care. If a fundholder purchases a community psychiatric nurse from outside the immediate area, in such circumstances local collaboration simply does not exist. The Government seem to be turning a blind eye to some of the inherent problems in the operation of the market as it applies to community care.

The divided structure between the national health service and local authorities adds to such organisational problems. Administrative difficulties undermine attempts at inter-professional and inter-agency working. No doubt the Minister will mention last year's Audit Commission report, which mentioned poor co-ordination, ineffective use of resources, and lack of communication and effective multi-disciplinary team working. Only 25 per cent. of health and social services authorities had actually established the criteria for operating the care programme, let alone actually got it working.

I have listened carefully to comments on the Mental Health (Patients in the Community) Bill that will shortly come before the House, but I am concerned that it addresses just one element, despite considerable pressure from a variety of sources for a much wider review of existing mental health provision and legislation. Indeed, the Mental Health Act Commission itself has called for the existing legislation to be updated and to reflect the shift towards care in the community.

There is concern that mental illness is regarded by that legislation primarily as a medical condition. That is where I disagree with the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton),, for whom I have great respect. Mental illness is a much wider issue than a clinical problem to be dealt with by doctors. I shall deal with that point in a moment.

One matter that the Government must address—in a sense, it was ignored by the hon. Member for Macclesfield—is the clear connection between mental illness and social factors. There are social reasons why people become mentally ill, and they must be looked at in the context of reviewing the policy on the care of people who have mental health problems.

Although "The Health of the Nation" identifies mental illness as a key issue for prevention, there is no acknowledgement of the need to shift towards social remedies to mental health problems. There is no acknowledgement that the deliberate widening of social inequalities has impacted significantly on mental health.

**Mr. Spring:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** I do not have time to give way. I apologise to the hon. Gentleman; I have two minutes left.

For example, a range of studies—I shall happily refer hon. Members to them—have now confirmed the connections between increased unemployment, mental illness and suicidal behaviour. Each year, more than 5,500 people commit suicide—more than those who die in road traffic accidents. We need to consider the social factors that result in such tragic figures.

It is crucial that the Government understand the clear connection between their own core policies and mental ill health. Housing policies result in record levels of homelessness, as people are dumped on the street because councils no longer have the ability to offer them proper accommodation. In areas such as mine, industrial policies that have wiped out entire industries, such as coal, and left people rotting on the dole, influence their mental health. The Government must address those problems.

Economic and social policies that lead to the redistribution of wealth away from poorer people towards those who have money have a bearing on the mental

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health of poorer people in our communities. Until the Government address those points, our debates will be on the periphery of the real issues we have to address.

The most important steps that any Government can take are preventive. Until the Government learn the central lesson that preventive measures are the key element, they will not come anywhere near dealing with the fundamental issues that need to be addressed in respect of the care of the mentally ill.

11.20 am

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. John Bowis):** I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) on initiating the debate and raising this subject in the House for the second time. I know that he has provided long and effective support for a number of national and voluntary organisations, and I welcome his involvement and his thoughts.

I also welcome the thoughtful contributions from both sides of the House and all sides of the arguments. I should mention those from my hon. Friends the Members for Bury St. Edmunds (Mr. Spring), for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans) and for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Heald), and from the hon. Members for Motherwell, South (Dr. Bray) and for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe), and the interventions from my hon. Friends the Members for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) and for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland), not forgetting the supervising presence of my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-East (Mr. Kirkhope), who is a founder member of the Mental Health Act Commission.

**Mr. Dennis Turner** (Wolverhampton, South-East): The Minister should not forget the Whips. He has mentioned everyone else.

**Mr. Bowis:** I mentioned supervising presences, and hon. Members can read into that what they will.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South on his choice of title for the debate. The element of care, perhaps caritas, is crucial to all health care, but perhaps it is even more fundamental when we are helping people to cope with an illness which, after all, frightens them and other people. It can be invisible and unpredictable, it is widely misunderstood and it produces prejudices in others which exacerbate the problem for the sufferer.

If we start with the concept of care in both its strands—of mattering to us and looking after those who are ill—we begin to build the understanding that will help us do better for people with mental health problems.

We need to care enough to care for the mentally ill. We need to care enough to overcome ignorance, remove stigma and provide the range of services that we all need. It is not just the 10 per cent. of us who currently need those services; it is the one in four of us who will do so during our lives. Mental illness can affect any of us, and will affect many of us.

The hon. Member for Wakefield spoke about prevention. Of course prevention is crucial. That is why our policies put so much emphasis on initiatives such as the "Defeat Depression" campaign and our work with employers, helping people to cope with stress and to lead mentally and physically active and fit lives. Everyone can play a part. At work, a flexible employer with a counsellor on board can help people who may be under stress at home or at work and need that additional support.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South said, it was Enoch Powell, some 30 years ago, who first advocated moving people from the old institutions back to the community, where many of them could live more fulfilling lives if given proper support. The development of new drugs for treating mental illness means that is possible for many more people. That does not mean that we can simply close down all the old hospitals and walk away. We need a range of facilities for care to work in the community.

It is our policy that hospitals should not close until and unless alternative provision is available. We need residential care—some of it sheltered—in or near communities. We need modern hospital facilities—long-term, medium-term and short-term. I have preached the case for medium-term hospital hostels to providers and purchasers in our health service, and I shall continue to do so. We need 24-hour crisis beds for those who cannot cope in the short term, and we need asylum in the best sense of the word—a place of safety in which to rest and improve one's mental health.

Some patients will need much longer spells in hospitals, and a few, sadly, will need to spend all their lives there. Some will need different levels of security, including medium-secure units, and a small number will need the high-security services in our special hospitals.

We have been concentrating on developing a range of facilities. Let me dwell for a moment on medium-secure provision, which is so important to so many issues that have been raised today. It fills a gap that was perceived and identified in 1974 by the Glancy committee. When the Government came to office in 1979, there was not a single medium-secure psychiatric bed in the country. We have invested £47 million in the programme, and by the end of next year we shall have provided 1,200 of those places. That makes so much more possible. In addition, further places are being developed by regions from mainstream NHS capital allocations, as well as in the private sector.

Reference has been made to enabling people to leave prison. In the past four years, we have enabled 2,500 patients to move from prison to hospital. I understand the impatience of my hon. Friends and the courts, but it is worth bearing in mind the fact that, a few years ago, that option was not available, as medium-secure beds were not being provided. The option has become available only recently, and it will increasingly be the route for the appropriate placement of people.

Reference has been made to the Mental Health (Patients in the Community) Bill, and I welcome what has been said about that. In answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds, we have issued new guidance on hospital discharge. I commend to him the discharge handbook, which is helping people to make the right decision and to ensure that the decision to discharge somebody is made only if the care programme is available and ready in the community, with the key worker in charge, and there are provisions for that individual's needs.

We have introduced through the House the new code of practice to the Mental Health Act, stressing that a person's health, as well as the risk to himself or to others, is

sufficient to take him for assessment and into hospital. We have introduced supervision registers, identifying those patients at significant risk of causing harm, committing suicide or harming other people if they are not given extra protection and care. Those are now in place in every health authority in the country.

We recognise the point, well made by hon. Members, about the need to have the right person in charge of someone in the community. It is not always a medical person. Sometimes the key need is social functioning. Sometimes—indeed more often—it is right that it should be a medical person, probably a community psychiatric nurse. We are making sure that those people are properly trained and know their role as key workers.

I am conscious of London's particular problems, which were referred to in the Royal College of Psychiatrists report, which drew attention to the fact that too many people were in the wrong beds. It was not just that there were insufficient beds, but that they were inappropriate beds. The medium-secure programme goes some way towards meeting that, as does the extra £10 million we put in and the mental health task force project, which identified good practice and listed where we needed to do better. It was followed up with a further report showing what had been achieved.

The £20 million homeless mentally ill initiative for London has funded 10 hostels, providing 150 bed spaces. Outreach teams are now taken on by the respective health authorities. In respect of accommodation, where the Housing Corperation agreed initially to 150 supported places, I am pleased to say that approval has now been given to some 162.

The mental illness specific grant is enabling local authorities to develop their community services. It has provided an extra £10 million this year, and £66 million in total. That has already supported 1,000 schemes throughout the country and helped 100,000 people.

The NHS has a role in ensuring that the care programme approach, registers and the priority that we give mental health are effective throughout the country. The beds are there, but we must ensure that they are the right ones. There are 20,000 acute beds and 80,000 long-term beds, as there have been over the past decade, but they are in different places. That is good news—provided that those beds are everywhere, to meet the range of need.

Nobody can be complacent about mental health. We must work together, because there is an inter-agency task ahead for us all. I re-emphasise, in this short response, our commitment to providing effective, appropriate and safe care for people with mental health problems.

## Personal Financial Services

11.30 am

**Mr. John Denham** (Southampton, Itchen): I am grateful for this debate and, following the recent Personal Investment Authority statement on the mis-selling of personal pensions and the Office of Fair Trading report on the selling of endowment mortgages, I hope that the debate will provide a timely opportunity to examine the serious problems that still exist in the sale of many personal financial services. I declare an interest, as I receive a modest contribution to my office research costs from the National Union of Insurance Workers. That is not a party political union or one affiliated to the Labour party. In fact, I believe that at the last general election it sponsored a Conservative candidate.

That union's sponsorship brings me no personal pecuniary benefit, but taking an interest in personal financial services since becoming a Member of Parliament has brought me personal financial benefit. As I began to take a closer interest in the operation of the financial services industry, I realised that I had been mis-sold a personal pension some time ago. Four years before I entered the House, I chose to become self-employed and acquired a personal pension. The mis-selling that occurred in my case was not one of the spectacular instances that hit the headlines in the past year, but a mundane, everyday example of mis-selling of the kind that collectively waste the savings of too many people. I was sold a regular premium policy even when I had made it clear to the financial adviser that I was most unlikely to continue in a personal pension scheme for more than a few years. I remember making it clear that I hoped to join within a reasonable period the generous occupational pension scheme offered to Members of Parliament.

In those circumstances, I should have been advised to make single premium payments into my personal pension policy, because, with a regular payment scheme, charges in the early years are much higher. Unless the policy is kept until maturity, it is an expensive way of saving. When I raised that matter with the company concerned, the error was admitted without fuss. The recalculation of my personal pension savings over the four-year period showed that, had I made single premium payments, my pension savings would have increased by no less than 50 per cent.—a significant difference.

When I told that story to a colleague in the Tea Room the other day he said, "If I'd been as daft as that, I certainly wouldn't go around telling people about it." That is part of the problem. Many people who are not unintelligent are unsophisticated when it comes to financial matters but are reluctant to admit to the fact. That makes them over-dependent on advice from people who may have a vested interest, and reluctant to ask hard questions or to complain when they fear that things are going wrong. I suggest that that is true of the majority of the people who bought a variety of personal financial services in recent years.

I shall outline some of the steps that need to be taken to minimise mis-selling, avoid wasting hard-won savings and restore public confidence in an industry of immense importance to the country and the British economy. It is important to set the scene.

The problems of mis-selling that came to light over the past couple of years occurred at precisely the time that the Government were urging ever-greater individual

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dependence on personal financial services, savings and insurance. The Government have openly and clearly pursued a twin-track strategy. They have provided financial incentives to leave state provision and to take out personal savings and pension policies, and they have progressively reduced the value and benefits of state provisions. The effect of that for many individuals has been to give them a choice between a rock and a hard place.

Over the past 10 years, the Government have encouraged opting out of the state earnings-related pension scheme, and the Pensions Bill now in Committee will take that further. The Government Actuary suggests that Government measures will reduce the national SERPS bill by nearly 50 per cent. over the next 45 years.

The Government have encouraged pensioners to take out health insurance while reducing access by the sick elderly to national health service beds. The Government are now requiring new mortgage takers to provide their own insurance cover because the Government are removing income support on interest payments on mortgages taken out from October.

The really damning indictment of Government policy is not just the shift from public provision to private insurance but the way that the Government made that shift without ensuring that consumers were guaranteed value for money and financial security from the private provision that they are encouraged to make. The scale and range of problems now facing consumers taking out private insurance and making private savings are daunting.

Half a million people will have their opt-outs and transfers from occupational pension schemes individually reviewed. The cost of restoring lost benefits to them is estimated at between £1 billion and £2 billion. The cost of administering the review is expected to run into hundreds of millions of pounds. The ultimate cost of compensating people who were mis-sold and of conducting the review and paying the fees and other charges will have to be met from the pockets of consumers.

According to the Office of Fair Trading, endowment mortgages—which accounted for 84 per cent. of the home loans market in the late 1980s and which are still the choice of an astonishing 60 per cent. of home owners—pose a higher risk and frequently are a more expensive option than repayment mortgages. The OFT strongly suggested that the existence of high commissions on endowment policies biased sales advice and distorted the market towards inappropriate policies for many people.

When the Department of Social Security and the Securities and Investments Board report later this year, they will confirm that people on low incomes—as many as 2 million—were wrongly advised to leave SERPS for personal pensions because their incomes were low, rebates were low and personal contributions over and above the rebate were low or non-existent. Fees and charges are eroding the savings of people who opted out for personal pensions. Some will be left with pensions of a lower value than they would have had under the state earnings-related pension scheme. At the very least, people on low incomes, who can ill afford risky saving strategies, have been exposed to an unacceptable degree of risk in the marketplace.

The cost of the opt-out has been enormous. By 1992, the cost of giving incentives to low-income savers—people on less than £10,000 a year—to opt out of the state scheme was £3.6 billion of public money given away, much of it now being absorbed in the fees and charges of insurance companies. By now, that figure is probably around £5 billion. That is an enormous amount of public money to transfer to the private sector to leave people with inadequate pensions which, in most cases, will be no better than they would have received under SERPS, and may be worse.

The extent to which that strategy has failed means that there will not even be a public saving in the long run. Projections made by such organisations as the National Association of Pension Funds in evidence to its income inquiry show that for many people those pensions will be below foreseeable state benefit levels, so people will have to have their pensions topped up through state contributions.

Bacon and Woodrow have recently suggested that many people are being sold private additional voluntary contribution schemes despite the fact that AVC schemes available to them through their occupational pension scheme provide better value at a lower cost.

Huge losses are incurred every year through the early cancellation of schemes. Evidence shows that 30 per cent. of endowment policies, which in most cases bring reasonable value only if they are kept to maturity, are cancelled within five years, and only 20 per cent. are kept to maturity. A couple of years ago, the Office of Fair Trading estimated that the cost of early cancellations to savers was running at £250 million a year. That is more or less a Maxwell scandal every year or so in the life assurance industry.

The cost is much greater than that because those savings were due to be kept over a long period. They were due to mature in 20 or 25 years' time. Therefore, the loss to savers at the time that they might have expected to get some return on their savings will be about £750 million to £1 billion a year.

Other problems are becoming apparent in other financial services that are not regulated under the Financial Services Act 1986 because they do not involve investment. Permanent health insurance policies often turn out to be anything but permanent. People find that their ability to claim on their policy is subject to the arbitrary decisions of company doctors who are subject to less accountability and fewer grounds for appeal than the doctors of the Department of Social Security who, in the general view of my constituents, are not always regarded as the most sympathetic members of the medical profession.

Loss of income policies, which are expensive to operate, in many cases turn out to have severe penalties. People who return briefly to work find that they can no longer renew their policy and end up with little to show for their money. Contracts are revoked arbitrarily when companies become aware that particular groups of employees are likely to be subject to redundancy.

Insurance on unsecured bank loans is enormously expensive and, in practice, subject to little competition at the point of sale. The Government have refused to regulate the market that they are creating in mortgage insurance. I predict with some confidence that, unless the Government change their mind on that, within months, and certainly within some years, it will become clear that

mortgage lenders are selling policies that over-insure when compared with the benefits that the Government are taking away.

The sum total of those problems is pretty disastrous. First and foremost, the waste of the public's money is a scandal. These days, people can ill afford to see their hard-won money frittered away; nor can the country, which faces a growing bill for future pension provision, afford to see money which could be accumulating as savings, as future pensions, absorbed in excessive fees, charges and the waste of early cancellation.

It is a sobering thought that, even when nothing goes wrong in the sales process, the results are far from satisfactory. With many companies selling personal pensions and endowment mortgages, nearly £1 in every £3 invested by the consumer is lost in fees and charges. One third of the potential pension, one third of the potential endowment return, goes to the company for its administrative costs and, in the case of shareholder companies, payment to shareholders. The Government cannot seriously expect to see private savings replace state provision when so much of the potential benefit, so much of the potential investment, is lost in that way.

The second problem is no less important. The current crisis threatens the integrity of a major important British industry which employs hundreds of thousands of people, makes a major contribution to Britain's national wealth and generates savings for investment on a scale unparalleled in most other European countries.

In the past year or so, there has been a sharp fall in the sale of some personal investment products. For example, there was a 10 per cent. fall in the sale of regular premium products between 1993 and 1994, and I am told that the first quarter of 1995 has been the most difficult for the industry for decades.

If that were a sign that individual savers were shifting away from some of the policies towards more prudent forms of investment, that would probably be good, but I suspect that that is not happening. I suspect that the fall in sales, the difficulty of making sales, reflects the drop in public confidence in the industry and is the effect of the highly publicised difficulties of recent years. If that is the case, individuals are simply failing to make any form of investment saving at all and, in the long run, that will bring a significant cost to themselves and the country.

The effect on the industry is also important because there are major opportunities for the United Kingdom insurance industry in Europe. Problems in the funding of state pension schemes in Britain, which most people recognise although they may have different solutions, are writ large in other European countries that have less developed non-state pension provision.

Therefore, there is an enormous potential market in Europe for expertise and direct services for the British insurance industry. However, I suspect that someone coming from most other European countries to look at the British industry and seeing the type of problems that I have outlined would be less than impressed with the record of recent years and less certain that under this Government ways of developing effective personal financial services had been developed as well as they could have been.

I did not seek this debate in order to rubbish the insurance industry. It is an important industry and, whatever the differences between the two sides of the House on where exactly the line is to be drawn between public and private provision, there is clearly a need for an active personal financial services industry. As working patterns change, as life-time employment in one company becomes a rarity, as the role of parents change, there will be a growing need for savings that only personal financial services can meet.

For example, most people need and will need a non-state pension in addition to any state pension. It is sometimes said that we cannot afford a state pay-as-you-go pension scheme. Logically, that is not true. The cost of any given pensions bill to the resources of the nation in 30 years' time is the same however it is funded. It is nearer the truth to say that, although we may happily pay the taxes to fund our parents' pension bill, we do not trust our children an inch. We are not certain that, in 30 years' time, they will be willing to vote for a Government willing to levy sufficient levels of taxes to pay our pensions. Demography shows that the demands on those children will be greater than they are on us.

Faced with that political risk—that is what we are talking about—prudence suggests that we should have our eggs in more than one basket and that people should have non-state pensions. If we are to sort out the mess and have a secure form of non-state pension, we will have to address the root causes of the problem. I do not have time to survey all the current regulatory issues, but I want to focus on some that have been given insufficient attention.

The failures of state regulation have been widely discussed in the technical and financial press. The attempt to turn poachers into gamekeepers failed, and all we got was poachers. But the tabloid press has had a different target. The tabloid press has greedy salesmen—sales reps who have eyes only for the commission that they can earn. In the popular mind and the popular media, they have been universally blamed for the mis-selling of recent years.

Some people, obviously, have been driven by greed or straightforward, outright dishonesty; but it offends against common sense to suggest that half a million people could have been induced to opt out of occupational schemes, and 2 million or more low earners could have been enticed from the security of SERPS, simply by the greed of individual financial advisers and sales representatives. Over the past year, I have talked to people who sell pensions and other insurance policies, and the picture that I have seen is rather different from the popular tabloid image.

Those people say—rightly—that much responsibility for the current problems lies with the Government. When the personal pension boom began, the Government spent £1 million on advertising the benefits of personal pensions, giving little or no warning of the problems. One memorable advertisement showed someone tied upside down in chains representing that person's existing pension provision. The advertisement told people about the new personal pensions:

"employees will be able to choose their own Personal Pension scheme instead of staying in SERPS or an employer's pension scheme."

It is now the received wisdom of the regulators that very few people who have the opportunity to join an occupational scheme should be encouraged not to do so, that very few people who are members of such a scheme should be encouraged to leave it, and that very few people who have deferred pensions from an occupational scheme

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should do other than leave them in that scheme. In their advertisement back in 1988, however, the Government clearly endorsed the idea that people should opt out of their employers' schemes.

I am not attempting to whitewash the industry, but it makes a fair response when it says that the Government encouraged the idea among the public that opting out was a good idea. None the less, the management of most insurance companies—the very people who were then put in charge of self-regulation—actively encouraged their sales forces and financial advisers to target those who have now been mis-sold policies.

There is still a great deal of foot-dragging in the industry in regard to sorting out problems. It has been dragged kicking and screaming into dealing with the problems of opt-outs and transfers from occupational schemes. It is now two years since the regulators told insurance companies that they needed to re-check the policies of all who had been sold personal pensions to ensure that they had been given good advice. The reasonable expectation—shared by the regulators—is for a substantial number of people on low incomes to have been advised by insurance companies to opt back into SERPS and out of their personal pensions, but as far as I know there is no sign that the industry is taking such action or that such a shift is taking place.

The main conclusion that I have reached, having spoken to people working in the industry, is that most of those who sell at the sharp end of insurance companies suffer employment conditions and practices in which mis-selling is likely to be an inherent danger. Commission on products plays an important role in that, less because of commission-driven greed than because for the majority of financial advisers—tied agents—commission is the source of their income. If they do not sell, they do not eat, pay their own mortgages or clothe their children. Some companies have recently introduced higher basic salaries, but for most employees any reasonable income is entirely dependent on sales performance.

That is not the only pressure on financial advisers, however; others are equally insidious. Many sales managers depend on override for their income. The managers obtain their own income from the commission generated by financial advisers working under them, which creates permanent pressure to sell throughout the management hierarchy. Companies use sales targets, often set at unrealistically high levels, to keep the financial advisers in a state of permanent job insecurity: anyone who does not meet the sales targets that cannot be achieved is constantly liable to dismissal for poor performance.

Financial advisers are vulnerable to the peculiar contracts in force in the industry. Sales representatives are held personally responsible for lost commission on policies that are cancelled early—which means that they can run up debts of thousands of pounds on policies that they sold in accordance with their companies' instructions and the regulators' own good practice guides. Indeed, in some cases people who move from one company to another see their own clients "churned"—sold new policies—and the resulting bills for the early cancellation follow them.

People with personal debts are not allowed to work in the insurance industry, so the consequence of such action is the denial of employment. More worryingly, people are tied into an insecure position in which pressure is on them to sell. Other companies push the legal interpretation of self-employment to the nth degree: companies in which people are clearly working permanently and receiving free training, software and support systems and are nevertheless encouraged—or forced—to work as self-employed.

It has been common practice for new entrants to the industry to be lent commission in advance of sales. It looks like a salary and feels like a salary—until the sales do not materialise, when it becomes a personal debt that those employees are liable to repay. Despite recent improvements in the regulatory requirements, it is clear that training standards and professional support for financial advisers vary widely. I was given more than one example of sales advisers' being assisted, quite improperly, to pass basic competence tests that are now required.

At the same time, the real burden of higher compliance standards is often felt by the front-line financial advisers. They are liable to lose their jobs if they make mistakes, at a time when they are under greater pressure to sell. Frequently, those responsible for disciplining financial advisers for making compliance mistakes are the same people—or part of the same management structure—as those who are setting unrealistic and demanding sales targets.

That puts the problem of commission in a different light from that generally shown by the tabloid press. Commission is a problem for three reasons. First, it is part of a complex set of pressures leading to job and financial insecurity for financial advisers. Highlighting commission alone will solve nothing unless the other pressures are tackled. Secondly, the effect of commission on the consumer is not so much salesman's greed as the distortion that it creates between products that offer different levels of commission. The Office of Fair Trading has highlighted the distortion between endowment mortgages, which carry high commissions, and products such as repayment mortgages, which carry little or no commission.

The most fundamental problem affecting employment in the financial services industry, however, is the fact that employment pressures run directly counter to the requirements of good regulation and the legal requirements of the Financial Services Act 1986 for the giving of best advice. It is a widely understood principle of any effective regulation of markets that financial incentives should reinforce the aim of the regulation. For the financial adviser—the tied agent, the sales representative—that means that giving best advice, which may be not to buy anything or to buy a product that carries little commission, should involve the same financial reward as selling a product attracting a high commission. That is not the position today. Until the problem is tackled and financial advisers are rewarded for their advice as much as for what they sell, mis-selling is bound to continue.

Over the past year or so, the number of people selling insurance has halved, but we have not yet created the network of financial advisers and tied agents that would provide the highly qualified, totally objective and well-rewarded individuals whom the industry and the consumer need. It is a sad fact that the regulators, whether SIB or LAUTRO—the Life Assurance and Unit Trust Regulatory Organisation—in the past or the Personal Investment Authority, have had almost nothing to say about employment practices in the industry; when they have, it has all been at arm's length. It is hoped that increasing training standards and costs will improve staff retention,

and that commission disclosure will change the reward structure. But it is all too little, too indirect and too ineffective.

In other areas of financial services product not covered by the Financial Services Act, the Government have relied overmuch on industry codes of practices rather than on direct regulation. As *Which?* revealed this month, poor financial advice is still widely available in the high street from insurance companies, building societies, bank assurance companies and independent financial advisers. Until employment practices in the industry are tackled, mis-selling will continue.

I accept that it is difficult for regulators to prescribe exact employment terms, but a number of things could be done. The regulators could study and issue good practice guidance on contracts, remuneration, discipline procedures and the setting and management of sales targets. That should emphasise the need for a substantial element of basic salary and for performance-related pay that reflects the quality of advice given, and not just the volume or value of sales achieved. Such guidance would provide a focal point for unions in the industry and for consumers to judge the company from which they were buying.

The regulators could and should introduce direct registration of all those selling insurance in the industry, making the contractual obligation of individual financial advisers to meet compliance standards one between the adviser and the regulator, not between the adviser and his own manager. Creating a directly regulated sales force would be a major step towards the genuine professionalisation of the industry and raising the status of financial advisers, and it would give some protection against the arbitrary use of discipline by managers and companies in the industry.

The Government could, of course, bring financial advisers' representatives into regulators' governing bodies or, more to the point, perhaps draw on the experience of financial advisers' representatives in establishing a system of statutory regulation. It is a real indictment of self-regulation that self-regulatory structures have never seriously tried to draw on the experience of people who actually sell personal financial services to try to improve regulation. I hope that that matter will be dealt with.

Another aspect of regulation has had too little attention. The whole emphasis of the regulatory effort has been on the sales process, not on the quality of product. It is hoped that improved disclosure will improve the quality of products. Indeed, the Minister of State, Treasury said:

"the new regime for disclosure will—we hope and intend—substantially improve the avoidance of problems of mis-selling."—[*Official Report*, 28 April 1995; Vol. 258, c. 1124.]

That is over-optimistic.

Certainly, league tables showing the dramatic effects of fees and charges are becoming available. They show, for example, that on a £50,000 endowment mortgage, an individual's choice of company can influence the final value of his investment by as much as £9,000. I doubt, however, whether disclosure will have much effect. Few signs exist that most tied agents are being trained to deal with increasing competition in the marketplace. In general, people still remain dependent on the building society, the bank assurer whom they first contact, or the tied adviser who first contacts them. Under the present regime, it will be many years, if ever, before disclosure really creates genuine competitive pressures that work in consumers' interests.

We need to consider ways of improving not only the quality of products in the market but the sales process. The Office of Fair Trading and consumer organisations have done far more to highlight the failure of different types of products than the regulators. That must change. A number of key areas for action exist.

First, when sales are made, customers should be told how their potential insurer compares with the industry as a whole in relation to key measures, such as the impact of fees and charges on the effective rate of return. Choice of company can influence the return on a personal pension of £50 a month by as much as £70,000, on total savings of, say, £250,000. That is the effect of the different charges levied by a company on the same assumed rate of investment return. It is in the consumer's interests to know how his potential insurer compares with others.

The shilly-shallying over disclosure of persistency rates should end. I have already the highlighted the waste through poor persistency rates. It is unacceptable that people do not receive information about how effective their company is at retaining its clients in any consistent form. If agreement cannot be reached with the industry—that seems to be the big problem—the Securities and Investments Board or the Personal Investment Authority should impose a standard definition of persistency rates to be used by all. Once again, that information should be available on a comparative basis to potential customers as well as on an individual company basis.

If companies choose to bump up their assumed investment returns or to reduce their premiums by assuming abnormally high rates of return, something needs to be done about that. The industry average assumed rate of return on investment is less than 8 per cent. Some companies, however, have produced projections assuming rates of return of 9.25 per cent. It enables them to produce large presumed bonuses or to reduce their premium rates substantially. A case exists for underlining that for consumers. They should be informed about what the current average industry assumption is so that they will be aware that they are being sold a policy that has an abnormally high assumed rate of return.

None of the measures that I have outlined would be expensive to enforce. Information could be regularly collected by regulators and supplied centrally on, say, a quarterly basis to companies to pass to customers. It would bring some genuine consumer choice and competition. Even if that were done, more would need to be done. Regulators should take on the responsibility of applying direct pressure on costs. The spread of fees and charges levied is far too wide. As I said, it is unacceptable that such a large proportion of people's savings—£1 in £3 in many cases—is absorbed in fees and charges. Nationally, that is an expense that we cannot afford. Consideration should be given to introducing over time a minimum acceptable level of charges, and companies exceeding that limit should be highlighted.

Action should be taken to prevent mis-selling to low-income individuals who would be better off in a state earnings-related pension scheme. One possibility would be to set a floor below which no transfer could take place. It might be more in tune with the market to introduce a requirement that any personal pension sold to someone below a given income level—perhaps £12,000 per

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annum—should be guaranteed by the company to perform no worse than the SERPS equivalent. That would soon sort out companies that had genuine confidence in their investment performance from those that did not.

We should be aware, as the regulator should be, of companies that, according to the Office of Fair Trading, use the money they make on early cancellations to bump up published maturity values of policies that are kept to term. The regulator should be prepared to tackle that abuse if necessary.

The Government should be boosting the industry by introducing more helpful and responsible measures than they have introduced to date. An underlying problem exists in that many people are under-insured and under-provided for in their retirement. The Government have simply said, "Take this private sector step," without underlining to people the fact of their under-insurance and under-provision.

The Government should undertake a regular survey of the real pension position of a large sample of the population at different ages and earning levels, and they should project forward the type of pension entitlement that is being developed. In many cases, that would highlight the degree of under-insurance and the need to make provision. Such a move would help to make the transition from a society where insurance products have to be sold to one in which informed consumers would choose to buy.

I have gone on longer than I intended, but I should like to make one final point. The Government also have a responsibility to set the framework in which people can take long-term decisions about personal financial services and personal savings. One of the things that has tipped the balance from endowment mortgages to repayment mortgages is the reduction of tax relief on mortgage interest payment. When the Government embarked a few years ago on their strategy of reducing and probably phasing out MIRAS, they gave no consideration to the impact on people's decisions to take out endowment mortgages. If the Government want to claim that they are encouraging greater dependence on personal financial services, they have a responsibility not to make decisions that change the ground rules after people have become locked into an investment decision.

For most people who have taken out an endowment mortgage, there is now no way out. It may have been a bad decision at the time, but trying to get out of it now would leave them even worse off, taking into account the costs of early cancellation. Of course, there is also the saga of the tax that never was, or the tax that may be—we are not sure which. That recent episode has highlighted the dangers of encouraging people to make personal provision and then threatening them with the possibility that they will be taxed on the money that they have put aside. What needs to go hand in hand with the Government's strategy of privatising social provision is long-term stability in Government policy, which the Government have been reluctant to provide.

We need an effective personal financial services industry and people need to be able to buy its products with confidence and security. So far, the Government's record has been marked by a mixture of irresponsibility and complacency. The regulatory system is by no means at the level required to ensure that the industry can offer consumers what they need. It also does not offer those who work in the industry the employment conditions that would enable them to act as truly objective and professional advisers. The quality of products on sale is much lower than it should be or needs to be. It is important that the Government deal with those problems in the very near future.

12.11 pm

**Mr. Alistair Darling** (Edinburgh, Central): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Denham) on securing this debate. During his time in the House, he has acquired a formidable reputation in the financial services area. It is to his credit that he has not only secured the debate but has made a number of constructive suggestions with the aim of improving the current unsatisfactory position.

The financial services industry is of immense importance to this country. Although, to a certain extent, my hon. Friend and I have a number of criticisms—in the proper sense of that word—to offer, no one should be in any doubt that we fully support the industry. Edinburgh—part of which I represent—is the fourth biggest financial centre in Europe, so I well understand that the industry is of immense importance. No one can level a charge against me that I do not have its best interests at heart when I make some suggestions to improve the present position. My hon. Friend shares my view.

The industry employs 2.5 million people, and many towns and cities depend on it for employment. Indeed, the industry as a whole, broadly defined, produces about 18 per cent. of this country's gross domestic product. As my hon. Friend said, it is of crucial and growing importance as a service provider, so it is important to have a regulatory system that commands confidence. It is also important that if there are problems—and undoubtedly there are—they should be dealt with in the spirit of trying to persuade more people to make provision for themselves, both for their benefit and for the benefit of the industry as a whole.

As my hon. Friend said, more and more people will want to make provision for themselves through savings, both long term and short term. The Government should encourage that as a matter of principle. Saving has worth for the individual as well as value for society as a whole because saving makes money available for investment—and long-term investment is something that this country needs.

Pensions are of growing importance, so it is crucial that we get the right regulatory regime. If an individual makes a mistake when he takes out a pension, it could be 20 or 30 years before he realises that the mistake has been made, by which time he can do nothing about it. We must remember the changing working patterns in this country, which make it unlikely that people will work for 30 to 40 years for the same employer before retiring with a gold watch. Instead, people will have many jobs and will go in and out of employment. It is important that they make the appropriate choice of pension. My hon. Friend was fortunate to discover his mistake at an early stage, so he had an opportunity to put matters right.

The problem we face—I use the word "we" advisedly—is that a mistake made at an early stage may not be discovered for many years, so nothing can be done

about it. It is a catastrophe not only for the individual but for us collectively because in the end the state has to put the matter right, inasmuch as it can do so.

People will want to buy other protections from the industry, and my hon. Friend mentioned endowment mortgages. I want to say a word about the concept of caveat emptor, which is important to the law of contract. I do not believe that the regulatory system or the Government can ever substitute their judgment for that of individuals and they cannot protect people against foolishness, stupidity or, in some cases, dishonesty. No one should try to get away from the fact that caveat emptor—buyer beware—is an important concept.

However, when dealing with public policy and matters as important as, for example, the sale of a pension, the doctrine of caveat emptor should be qualified by the recognition that there must be a regulatory system that at least tries to minimise the risk that people will be sold inappropriate products. In other words, there is a public interest in proper regulation. That is something that the Opposition have long recognised, but I am not sure that it is universally recognised by the Government.

We need a regulatory system that commands the confidence of the industry and the public: both are important. Currently, the problem is that the regulatory system commands neither the confidence of the industry—where more and more people are saying publicly as well as privately that the system simply is not working—nor the confidence of the general public. There is a need for that confidence, for the benefit both of individuals and of us collectively as members of society. It is not in our interests that people should be scared off or discouraged from making provision for themselves.

My hon. Friend referred to the pension transfer problem, which has been raised in the House on many occasions. The problem continues. I am disappointed to note that the industry—or at least certain parts of it—are determined to challenge, through the courts or by other means, the determination of the Personal Investment Authority to resolve the problem and examine cases where mistakes may have been made. The industry must understand that if the public sees it trying to avoid putting right mistakes made in the past, they will understandably say, "I will not trust the industry in the future." The selling of financial services, in particular pensions, demands trust more than anything else. If a mistake has been made—and it is common ground that mistakes may have been made—it is far better for the industry to put up its hands and say, "It's a fair cop," and try to put things right.

I understand the legal constraints on the trustees of funds and their duty towards those funds, but the industry must understand that if it prevaricates, delays and gives the impression that it is not willing to put things right for the people to whom it has sold its policies, the industry itself will suffer. That would be in nobody's interest.

My hon. Friend referred to the SERPS problem, where there may have been substantial mis-selling. That problem is only just beginning to come to light. It will haunt the Government for the rest of their time in office, and it will also haunt future Governments. That is why it is important to deal with problems when they come to light, rather than shovelling them into a dark corner, hoping that they do not return.

Significantly, figures show that since the pension transfer problem came to light sales are down by about 10 per cent., and even more in some cases. That is largely because the public have lost trust, which now needs to be restored. A number of steps should be taken to achieve that.

First, the regulatory system needs to be reformed. As I have said, I believe that self-regulation, in particular, has been discredited. Few people are now prepared to stand up and defend self-regulation. Unfortunately, those few are in the Chamber. The Government simply will not accept that a mistake was made in the mid-1980s when self-regulation was thought to be an appropriate way of dealing with these sales. If the Government accepted that, they would propose fresh legislation to correct the fundamental flaw in the Financial Services Act 1986.

Self-regulation is a fiction anyway, because the present system is rooted in statute. A tennis club is self-regulated, as are voluntary organisations. When the Personal Investment Authority was set up, we had the fiction of it bidding for recognition by the Securities and Investments Board, when the PIA knew that it would not be recognised unless it complied with every last dot and comma required by the SIB. The legal fact is the PIA's obligation to its members.

That fiction is cumbersome, expensive and results in duplication, as we have seen in the sale of personal pensions. Both the SIB and the PIA are prescribing rules and regulations and are making pronouncements. Significantly, when the problem with pension transfers first came to light, some within the Financial Intermediaries, Managers and Brokers Regulatory Organisation, which has been subsumed within the PIA, stated that the problem was being greatly exaggerated. That may have been so, but it does not help public confidence when the regulator appears to be acting as if it were a trade association.

I do not believe that it is possible to serve two masters—the trade interest and the public interest—at the same time. Our proposed reforms should leave no one in any doubt that the ultimate master of the regulators must be the public interest, not the trade interest. I do not suggest that it is not in the industry's interests to have a regulatory system that commands confidence, but I do not think that self-regulation can command confidence in the 1990s. It may have had its day in the 1980s, but the Government must accept that that day has gone.

Different regulation is required for different ends of the market. The problems at Barings—I shall not go into those, as we are not discussing them today—were of prudential supervision. At the other end of the market—the market we are discussing today—we are dealing with the need for proper customer protection and rules of conduct.

Any reform of the system must recognise that there are two distinct needs and that they must be dealt with appropriately. In that connection, I wish to consider briefly the nature of regulation required. It is necessary to tread a fine line between sufficient regulation to maintain public interest and over-regulation, whereby we may lose sight of what we are trying to achieve.

I suggested that it was not possible to exclude stupidity, greed and foolishness, but one can try to reduce the likelihood of their occurring. That is why I believe that the time has come to look at the nature of regulation. Many people say that the industry is being strangled by

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regulation. Independent financial advisers are important if we are to provide a facility for proper impartial advice, and many of them believe that they are being squeezed out by the new rules.

We must get away from the box-ticking approach to regulation, whereby advisers are told to tick boxes to show what they have done. That does not prove anything. If Robert Maxwell had been alive today, he would have ticked every box that was ever shoved in front of him. I never ticked a box when I was in practice as an advocate, and people who consulted me relied on the trust that they had in their professional adviser. My hon. Friend said that the regulatory system should be geared towards promoting a long-term commitment to the industry and professional integrity.

I have some sympathy for those who believe that all the rules and regulations have been put in place to protect the regulator, so that if anything goes wrong it can say that it has a rule to deal with the problem. It is necessary to look at the regulations, to streamline them and to put them in broad terms. We should have four rules and regulations which work, rather than 400 or 4,000 which do not. The PIA should undertake the fundamental review that is necessary now, rather than going further down its present road of having so many rules and regulations that we lose sight of what we are trying to achieve.

We must also look at the way in which products are sold, and my hon. Friend spoke on this matter with a great deal of force. He mentioned the role of the Government, but I do not want to say very much about that as I have made these comments before. It is worthy of note, however, that the Government created the culture in which mis-selling can take place.

My hon. Friend drew attention to the advertisement that has been shown again and again as a public information advert, although it seems to me to be stretching public information almost to the point where credulity is broken. The advertisement refers to the mis-selling of pensions. In the late 1980s, the Government led people to believe that the very act of going private was enriching in itself. It did not matter how much money one had, or what one's prospects were: if one got a private pension, one must be better off.

That allowed a climate in which unscrupulous salesmen, as well as people who thought that they should do what the Government wanted, could sell policies that were manifestly unsuitable for the people to whom they were sold. It is no wonder that the Government promoted self-regulation at that time, because self-regulation, which became increasingly equated with self-interest, went hand in hand with the culture that so dominated our lives in the late 1980s—a culture which, I am happy to say, is being increasingly discredited, and not just in the area of financial services.

My hon. Friend stated that many commentators tended to blame what are called unscrupulous salesmen, but they have not concentrated on the role of the employer, who usually sends salesmen out into the market. Those in the industry who complain about its image and who say that the industry is not held in high esteem should grasp the fact that the problem is substantially of their own making. If there is no trust between someone who is buying a product and the person selling it, it is inevitable that mistakes will be made and that people will not trust each other. That is why I fully support the independent sector, which is very important if it is genuinely independent.

People in the industry have been content to send salesmen out to areas devastated by pit closures, for example. Firms recruited people who had perhaps been in the NUM and were well known in the community to go through the area selling policies that should never have been sold. People were persuaded to opt out of the coal board pension. The management of those firms knew full well what was going on.

The industry must recognise that it is not in its long-term interests to sell inappropriate policies or policies that may be surrendered. My hon. Friend made a very good point about that, and the sooner some light is shone in some dark corners of the industry, the better for everyone.

I have never understood why, when something goes wrong in a mutual company, the regulators should impose a fine on the company and not on its directors and management. The fine imposed on a mutual company is paid by policyholders, who lose twice. They buy a policy, and then discover that the fund has been diminished by the extent of the fine. That is entirely inappropriate.

My hon. Friend drew attention to the role of commission and its influence on sales. I visited a prominent national life company—I shall not name it, as I do not think that it is unique in this respect—where I was shown its great training course. I was told that it had complied with every rule and regulation in the book. I had an opportunity to speak to some of the people on the course, and one of them told me that the salesmen had to make 10 contacts—a contact is reported back to management—and three sales every week, or they would lose their jobs. What happens on a Friday afternoon when the salesman has made only six contacts and one sale? I suspect that the conditions are then right for mis-selling to take place.

As my hon. Friend has said the problem that many sales people face is that they need to sell to make ends meet and to keep their jobs. In that climate, it is not surprising that mistakes are made. My hon. Friend and others have drawn attention to what has happened with pensions transfers and endowment mortgages. It cannot be right that people are put under pressure to buy something, simply because an individual needs that sale or commission to keep his job. If that is allowed to continue, it will be bad for industry and for society as a whole. That is why it must be stopped.

I do not believe that one can abolish rewards or incentives and I would not seek to do so, but the industry needs to look at how commission influences sales. Individuals can be rewarded for effort in other ways, and people should be rewarded for increased effort. The industry should remember that opposing disclosure, as it did for many years, does it no good whatever. It now opposes moves to do something about commission. It is high time that it grasped that difficult nettle and did something about it.

The Government's policy towards the pensions market is misplaced. We believe that state and private provision are complementary. It is appropriate for many people to have private pensions—I have had some in my time—but it is important for others to have occupational pensions. It is wrong to suggest that private personal pensions are

always best, and it was wrong of the Government to act as a recruiting sergeant for the sale of personal private pensions, as they did as a matter of policy in the 1980s.

It was a triumph of Conservative party ideology over common sense and public interest. It is the Government's job to promote the idea of having pensions and savings and then set appropriate standards and an appropriate framework so that individuals can make a choice that suits their personal circumstances. It is not for the Government to tell people that they must do one thing or the other.

It is important for the long-term interests of the industry and the country as a whole that people make proper pensions provision for themselves. Many thousands of people do not have adequate cover and some have no cover at all. The regulatory system should therefore be geared towards promoting the holding of pensions and savings.

The situation with regard to pensions in this country is bleak. By 2015, there will be 15.5 million pensioners. Although the present pension is worth about 15 per cent. of average male earnings, by 2030, on present policy, it will be worth 7 or 8 per cent. People will therefore want to provide for themselves and increase what they can expect from the state, and should be encouraged to do so.

It is the Government's role to educate people in the broadest sense and to create a regulatory system that gives them the confidence to deal with the industry on a basis of trust and assurance, knowing that they will be sold policies that are appropriate for them.

The regulatory system should be used far more to promote competition. We hear much rhetoric about competition—I dare say that we shall hear some this morning—but that rhetoric differs from actual competition. It is perfectly true to say that there are hundreds of different providers, but there is less apparent difference among the products available.

We need more openness. Fees, commission and administrative costs must be exposed, as knowledge of those will make for a better and more informed choice. I am glad that the Government accepted last year the need for disclosure. It is too early to say how successful disclosure will be. Ultimately, the best compliance will come from the public if they are in a position to make an informed choice and judgment.

The regulatory system should be used far more, acting in the public interest to look at problems with a view to opening up the market so that people can make an informed choice. The regulator should be not a passive but an active organisation, looking into matters such as persistency rates and other problems that come to light, so that consumers can make an informed choice. The regulatory system cannot substitute its judgment for that of individuals but it can create the right environment, and we want to promote that fact.

I mentioned disclosure and the need for openness because, as my hon. Friend said, there is something wrong when people buy a product—he mentioned endowment mortgages—simply because it is better for the building society or whoever sells it. It is curious that building societies, which are mutual bodies that exist for the benefit of their members, should conspire to sell inappropriate products to their members. Building societies might wish to reflect on that. The sums that building societies receive by way of insurances generally need to be looked into more.

My hon. Friend the Member for Itchen mentioned comparisons and league tables, and he was right to say that those are not the complete answer.

**Mr. Mike O'Brien** (Warwickshire, North): My hon. Friend is right to say that the industry needs regulation to restore confidence in it. All the evidence that the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee has taken from the industry and elsewhere suggests that confidence needs to be restored and that effective regulation can ensure that confidence exists. Whatever the costs, the cost of not having regulation will be far greater for the industry in the long term than the cost of ensuring that regulation is proper and effective.

**Mr. Darling:** I agree with my hon. Friend. First, we should all be alarmed at the compliance cost of regulation because, ultimately, money spent on compliance will not be available to pay out when policies mature. That is one reason why we should look at how the regulatory system works. All those rules and regulations cost a great deal of money and it is ironic that, because of the nature of self regulation, the Government, who say that they want to get rid of red tape, are conspiring to create more red tape. Self-regulators, more than regulators set up on a proper footing, tend to take the belt-and-braces approach to protect themselves against criticism, and that needs to end.

Secondly, I have said time and again that good regulation will pay for itself, which is why we want to put it on a proper footing. There should be unanimity for putting it on a proper footing, not just between the industry and the public but on both sides of the House, but that unanimity does not yet exist.

I wish to make an important point about comparisons. Put simply, the regulatory system should put individuals in exactly the same position as chief executives or chairmen of life assurance companies. A couple of years ago, I attended a seminar at which the chief executive of a respectable life assurance company showed the audience a graph of the performance of three different policies with a term of 30 years. The first steadily increased in value so that, if it were cashed in at any time, its value would have steadily increased. The second policy gained nothing for the first 10 years but, if it were cashed in thereafter, the gains would not have been too bad. The third policy would have yielded absolutely nothing unless it was kept for at least 29 years, after which its value rocketed and its performance was good.

The public would like to have such information. That chief executive had it because he worked inside the industry. At the end of the seminar, I was staggered to see all the other chief executives approach him and ask which companies he had quoted from, which makes me wonder whether we could do something better with the regulatory system. That example makes the case for publishing comparisons so that members of the public are in the same position as that chief executive. It is important that we ensure that people make the provision that best suits them and do not simply accept an option that is most profitable for the salesman.

We should all reflect on the fact that many people have inadequate pension provision. Many more people honestly believe that they have provided for themselves but are in for a rude shock when they reach 60 or 65 and discover that the pot contains not nearly as much as they had been led to believe. It is extremely important that this Government and future Governments educate the public

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so that people understand that, to maintain the standard of life that they have come to expect or would like to have, the decisions that they make, particularly on pensions, are absolutely crucial. It is the job of the regulatory system, acting in the public interest, to ensure that that happens. Our view that self-regulation does not work is finding growing support throughout the country and inside and outside the industry.

The Minister may pray in aid the familiar refrain for all those sensible reforms: a lack of parliamentary time. In the past few weeks, we have all been struck by the fact that the Government seem to be stuck for matters to put before Parliament. We have plenty of parliamentary time to deal with this problem. We shall deal with it, but it would be nice to think that, in the remaining time allotted to them, the Government might start to accept the problem.

The financial services industry is immensely important, not just to those who work in it or to the country for the wealth that it creates but because of its crucial role in enabling people to make provision for themselves. We need to support that, and it is important that people make the right choices.

Unfortunately, the present system is not working. Consequently, many people continue to receive inappropriate advice and make the wrong choices, with the result that, in 20 or 30 years, those who follow us will have to pick up the pieces. That thought, more than any other, should motivate the Government to act, and to act now.

12.39 pm

**The Minister of State, Treasury (Mr. Anthony Nelson):** I hope that everything that I say today will reassure the House that the Government take investment matters very seriously, and that we have supported several measures to try to crack down on mis-selling.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Denham) on being chosen for the debate and on selecting a subject which is of great importance to millions of people outside the House and which, as he acknowledged, also has economic implications.

The Government have sought in several ways to improve investor protection, not only in the Financial Services Act 1986. Increasingly, in recent years, following some unhappy incidents of mis-selling and the collapse of certain firms, we have revisited the regulations under the legislation and also the personalities and the mechanisms for giving effect to the regulations.

We have increasingly created a system of law and a structure of regulation which can provide greater investor confidence. However, it is not a sector in which absolutes, certainties or guarantees can be provided. Self-regulation lies best with the investors themselves. There is a responsibility on individuals to seek good advice, to spread their investments, to ensure that they rely to some extent on their education and common sense, and not to confuse authorisation with a guarantee. Those are essential components in sharing the responsibility for safe and secure investment in the United Kingdom.

The hon. Member for Itchen was honest enough to admit that part of his interest in the subject was aroused by the fact that he had been mis-sold a personal pension. I think that anyone should be careful about approaching the hon. Gentleman in future in that regard as he has demonstrated a considerable grasp of the subject and it would now be difficult to mis-sell him anything. However, I welcome his honest admission that it is an extremely complicated subject even for intelligent people, let alone those who are more vulnerable to mis-selling. It therefore behoves all of us, in trying to build systems of investor protection, to remember the simplicity alongside the accustomed complexity that is sometimes necessary to deliver that protection.

**Mr. Denham:** It is not correct that I became interested in the subject because I was mis-sold a pension. It was only when I became interested in the subject that I realised that I had been mis-sold a pension. I should hate to think of all the consumers out there having to spend as long as I did trying to understand the industry before realising that they have been sold a pup.

**Mr. Nelson:** A little knowledge has proved to be a valuable thing for the hon. Gentleman, and I am delighted about that.

The hon. Gentleman demanded many changes. I wish to reflect carefully on several of his arguments. I shall also make it my business to ensure that the positive suggestions that he made are considered carefully by the regulators outside the House—the Securities and Investments Board and the Personal Investment Authority. Indeed, I believe that they are already considering several of his suggestions.

If I may say so without causing embarrassment, the contents of the hon. Gentleman's speech were far more specific, relevant and constructive than those of the speech of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) who, when speaking to the Labour finance and industry group on 1 May 1995, heralded a great package of new Labour plans for investor protection. In fact, it was nothing of the kind, and the thin coverage subsequently given by the media to the paucity of his proposals shows what a vacuum it was. Today, however, we heard a speech of substance. I give credit where it is due, and it is due to the hon. Member for Itchen.

The hon. Gentleman suggested that there should be direct regulation of salesmen. I know that the PIA is considering that, but I would say to the hon. Gentleman and to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling), who came close to recognising it towards the end of his speech, that there must always be a balance between the imposition of regulation and the cost of compliance. The costs are already the source of great complaint from the industry and, as was recognised in the debate, they are passed on to the customer—no one else pays them—so there must be a limit to the extent to which we can bind the Leviathan of that industry with the tape of regulations and requirements which impose impossible costs on the viability of those who offer those services, as well as the people who invest through that medium.

**Mr. Darling:** Does the Minister not grasp my argument that many of the costs are being incurred in a futile manner because they achieve nothing? If we are to spend any money on regulation, we should try to do so effectively, so that it bears fruit. At present, we have plenty of regulation, but it is not clear that it achieves the ends that we want.

**Mr. Nelson:** That is simply not true.

Let us consider the important issue of personal pension mis-selling, which was mentioned by the hon. Member for Itchen. That problem came to light initially partly because the Life Assurance and Unit Trust Regulatory Organisation identified certain problems. It was then the subject of scrutiny by the SIB, which in December 1993 identified the problem and said that it would undertake a survey to identify the extent of it.

In March 1994, the SIB introduced revised rules for selling to prevent such mis-selling occurring in future. In October 1994, the SIB made proposals for the reviewing of the cases of all those people who had been mis-sold personal pensions. I am amazed that the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central has not got the message. That is not a deficiency but a success of the regulatory system. It may be uncomfortable. It may be costly for people to identify and seek redress—at the cost of the industry—for the cases in which mis-selling has occurred, but a responsible and effective regulatory system should aim to do exactly that.

Let us consider the report about endowment mortgages which was recently published by the Office of Fair Trading. It may be uncomfortable for the industry and for people who feel that they should perhaps have chosen a repayment rather than an endowment mortgage, but it would have been even more uncomfortable if that situation had persisted without being identified and some redress suggested. That is another success of the system.

Success is not always welcomed as a beneficial move from which everyone gains. We sometimes have to recognise that a part of success lies in identifying where problems have occurred, however difficult it may be to face up to those—and, my goodness, the costs and problems of facing up to personal pensions mis-selling are considerable; nevertheless, the Government and the regulatory system set up by the Government's legislation have identified those problems and made proposals to redress them.

It is not a perfect system. It is not a perfect world. We shall not always uncover every instance of mis-selling. However, considering the changes that have taken place—especially, with the establishment of the PIA, the re-vetting of more than 5,000 firms which are being admitted into the PIA—the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central, should be more generous in recognising that the Government are, through our system, seeking seriously and substantially to identify the ways in which things have gone wrong and to make redress where appropriate.

**Mr. Denham:** Does the Minister accept that the pace of change is far too slow? It is nine years since the passage of the Financial Services Act 1986, and we still do not have a satisfactory regulatory system. Does the Minister accept that there is a complete lack of evidence that the regulatory system can respond quickly enough and develop quickly enough as new problems become apparent?

**Mr. Nelson:** No, not really. It is true that I have my frustrations with the existing system, but such frustrations would be felt about any system. Putting a statutory label on either an existing or partially revised system is not a panacea. The answer does not always lie in structures or the people within them, but it certainly lies in the decisions made by people within whatever structure exists.

The Labour party is hung up, as it always has been, by legislation. A week ago, the first words of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East were, "We will regulate. We will legislate." That was his clarion call and that is the starting point for the Labour party. I do not want to introduce a partisan note, because the hon. Member for Itchen did not make a partisan speech, but passing simple legislation designed just to shake up the system does not mean that people will not be mis-sold inappropriate products. The answer is much more complicated. We must consider some of the genuine suggestions made by the hon. Member for Itchen to see whether we can improve the system.

The hon. Gentleman referred to personal pensions and the state earnings-related pension scheme. It is right that the SIB should give priority to redressing the mis-selling of personal pensions because, although we shall not know the extent of that mis-selling until we have the results of the review that is being conducted at an individual level, the problem associated with SERPS appears to be a smaller one than that of personal pensions.

The hon. Gentleman suggested that the Government were responsible for all the problems of mis-selling because we promoted personal pensions. It is true that, when my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was a junior Minister at the Department of Social Security, he was instrumental in bringing the programme forward. I say that with acclaim, not recrimination, because personal pensions were, have been and remain appropriate for many people. They are a flexible means of providing for retirement and many people should continue to hold one or to take one out in the future.

The Department of Social Security has, however, made it clear in the leaflets that it has published and in other publicity that people should think carefully before entering into personal pension arrangements. It is a fact, however, discovered and redressed within our existing system, that mis-selling has happened. That is being put right in order to re-create and redress the confidence that the industry should rightly deserve.

As I said when the Office of Fair Trading report on endowment mortgages was published, and which I have now read, I shall wish to consider its contents carefully. We hope and intend that the system of disclosure which came into effect at the beginning of this year will go a long way towards redressing some of the mis-selling problems and those caused by inappropriately taking out endowment mortgages. I place rather more reliance on that transparency than do the hon. Members for Itchen and for Edinburgh, Central, who seemed to suggest that disclosure would not do the trick and was not sufficient in itself. I agree that it is not sufficient in itself, but I place rather more reliance on it than I perceive that they do.

I welcome the fact that the Council of Mortgage Lenders is working on a code of practice for the selling of mortgages. The building societies ombudsman now has a pre-contractual remit—admittedly, not retrospectively dated—which essentially means that he will be able to investigate individual cases when people complain that they have been mis-sold a mortgage. He may be able to make recommendations in such cases. Endowment mortgages come, of course, under the Financial Services Act 1986 to the extent that the endowment or investment aspect is covered by it.

*[Mr. Nelson]*

The hon. Member for Itchen made an important point about the relationship between the problem of mis-selling, changes in the industry and opportunities within the European Union. He rightly said that we are ahead of other countries, if that is the right description, in having funded pension schemes and long-term savings schemes. I agree with him that there is a tremendous opportunity for our investment services industry to be the haven and trustee for long-term savings within the European Union. I also agree that part of the prospect of obtaining that business will be delivered only if confidence in the industry and its reputation are recreated and adequate arrangements, both fiscal and regulatory, are introduced in the European Union to deliver that. Hon. Members will know that some of the changes that we have introduced in this year's Finance Bill are determined to exactly that end.

About a week ago, I announced proposals for open-ended investment companies. I predict that they will be one of the most exciting vehicles for long-term savings in this country. Over a number of years they will transform the landscape of savings in this country. As unit trusts convert into open-ended companies, we will also be on a par with many of the savings products and savings vehicles sold out of Luxembourg and Dublin docks. We should all have a party when some of the firms come home from those locations and attract the funds, employment, liquidity and benefits to the United Kingdom economy. That will happen as a result of some of the Government's proposals in conjunction with the industry. That is a positive development.

The hon. Member for Itchen referred to commission. He was concerned that the commission-led system, as he saw it, led to some bias in the selling of investment products. He would prefer a system that rewarded best advice. I share and understand those sentiments, but I have some difficulty in endorsing proposals either to put an end to commission, which he is not suggesting, or to introduce some rapid change to create alternative systems, as yet unspecified, which reward only best advice. As the hon. Gentleman said, sometimes the best advice may be to do nothing or not to buy any product.

People can pay an independent financial adviser to give them advice, which may be to do nothing. That is the benefit of such a person and that is what those advisers proclaim to be their unique role. Commission is an interesting but complex issue. In its absence, will people pay others to receive objective advice? I am afraid that all experience tells us that people simply will not do that. People are not prepared to go to another person and write out a cheque to him in order to get independent financial advice. They will get that advice if it appears to be free, and then subsequently a commission payment is involved.

My fear is that by arbitrarily getting rid of the commission system, if one were to be so radical, one would end up with much lower standards of investment advice and much more inappropriate selling of investment products. I do not think that the answer lies in such a radical move, but I understand the sentiment which led the hon. Gentleman to suggest that we should reward best advice rather than allow it to be market-driven by those who could offer and provide the greatest commission.

The hon. Gentleman made an important point about training and competence in the industry. I hope that he, like me, welcomes the fact that the PIA recently issued proposals and rules for training and competence, which will require all investment advisers to obtain a financial planning certificate. There will be no grandfathering into the scheme, because all those advisers will have to take the new exams to varying levels. Various organisations, such as the Securities Institute, have a keen desire to improve professional competence through more adequate training. I believe that in the future we shall see a sea change in the quality of people on the doorstep and on the telephone selling of investment products.

The hon. Gentleman expressed doubt that disclosure would do the trick and called instead for some product control. Some of his proposals would not so much control the product as attach a few bells and whistles to the proposed system. He called in particular for comparative company charges, persistency rates disclosure and current average industry consumption, but the PIA is already proposing to publish lapse rates. Proposals relating to key fact documents will also be implemented. The Securities and Investments Board will review the system of disclosure once it settles down.

In these and other ways the Government, the SIB and the PIA are taking the issue of investor protection very seriously. We hope that the future will be better than the past and that many of the problems that the hon. Member for Itchen and others have identified will be solved. I thank the hon. Gentleman for the positive suggestions that he has made, and I hope that my answer has reassured the House.

# Prisoners of War (Japan)

12.59 pm

**Mr. Patrick Nicholls** (Teignbridge): There were obviously many emotions sweeping the country during the VE day celebrations. Many people were thinking about their family members and friends who died during the second world war, and many more were thinking about their fallen comrades and reflecting upon the fact that they themselves survived. Despite that sombre note, it seemed to me that the overwhelming feeling was of joy not simply that a great battle had been won, but that there had been a degree of reconciliation between those who had fought on opposing sides.

The press carried a number of moving stories of how those who had fought on opposing sides had come together for the celebrations. We also heard about the sons of former Army commanders who had met and found, perhaps not surprisingly, that they had at least as many things in common as they had differences. Whatever the complex mix of sentiments expressed during the VE day commemorations, overwhelmingly the mood was one of joy and celebration.

However, there is one group of survivors from the last war for whom I suspect that the celebratory aspect was very muted indeed. They had undergone suffering which defies imagination. Even those of us who are of a generation who do not remember the war, who have perhaps been hardened by an unremitting diet of man's continuing inhumanity to man, and who have been brought up in a society where we see death and mutilation in our own homes whenever we turn on the television news, are chilled when we remember what those people went through. I speak of those people who survived the prisoner-of-war camps of the Japanese.

I do not intend to use the debate to castigate the nation of Japan or to suggest that the Japanese of my generation bear a responsibility for what happened during the second world war. I do not suggest that for one moment. However, I think that it is essential that I remind the House and the former prisoners-of-war that we have not forgotten their trauma and their nightmarish experiences.

Many years after the war, Field Marshal Lord Slim, who led the 14th Army, recorded how he and the liberating armies had uncovered prisoner-of-war camps that were

"little more than barbed wire enclosures in which wild beasts might have been herded together".

He went on to describe the Japanese gaolers

"almost without exception as being callously indifferent to suffering, or at the worst, bestially sadistic. The food was of a quality and a quantity barely enough to keep men alive, let alone fit them for the hard labour that most were driven to perform. It was horrifying to see them moving slowly about those sordid camps, all emaciated, many walking skeletons, numbers covered with suppurating sores and most naked apart from the ragged shorts that they had worn for years or loincloths of sacking. The most heart-moving of all were those who lay on wretched pallets, their strength ebbing faster than relief could be brought to them".

The testimony did not end there. In his book "The Night of the New Moon", Laurents van der Post described his experiences in a POW camp on Java. He described how POWs were forced to watch Japanese soldiers having bayonet practice on live prisoners tied between bamboo posts, and how POWs were made to witness different types of executions—I shall omit the details he gives. Ernest Hiller wrote of his experiences in a similar camp in his book "The Way of a Boy". He described how the military police—the Kempetai—tore out finger nails, burned the stomachs of pregnant women, locked POWs in bamboo cages for days without food or water, and much more besides.

Of the thousands of prisoners-of-war who were forced to build the Burma-Siam railway, it is estimated that one person died for every sleeper laid. Some 50,000 British troops were taken into captivity, of which a stunning 25 per cent. died. That is a truly remarkable figure, which says something about the unique nature of their experiences.

It is hardly surprising that the suffering of the people who survived those experiences continues to this day. It is even more heart-rending to learn that it not only continues but increases. I shall quote from "A Study of the Post-Captivity Health of ex-Prisoners of War of the Japanese" by J. Watson, which I believe is the leading work in this area. It was published in July 1986.

Mr. Watson details the conditions from which ex-POWs suffer. He concludes:

"It has for some time been recognised and accepted that ex-FEPOWs do suffer from a variety of psychiatric manifestations. These can include nightmares about their experiences, general irritability, anti-social behaviour, chronic anxiety and intermittent depression. It is also recognised and accepted that such features may not have manifested themselves until many years after the period of captivity had ceased and, indeed, the occurrence has sometimes been described as the 'late-onset ex-FEPOW syndrome'. It is therefore not surprising that 44.5 % of the sample had exhibited psychiatric manifestations at some time".

He goes on to describe psychiatric manifestations as covering anything from nervous symptoms to full-blown psychosis. It is clear that those who survived the prisoner-of-war camps continue to undergo suffering that is every bit as real today as it was during the war.

It must be said in passing that I do not decry in any way the experiences of those who suffered imprisonment at the hands of the Germans during the second world war. However, what was the exception under German captivity—to which the late Eric Williams drew attention—was the rule in the treatment of British and allied prisoners under the Japanese. It was an entirely different situation for prisoners of the Japanese. What was considered to be in breach of German military law was accepted as the norm and the appropriate way to treat Allied prisoners of war. That is what the POWs suffered in Japanese hands.

A treaty of peace with Japan was signed in 1951. Article 14(a) of the treaty provided:

"Japan should pay reparations to the Allied Powers for the damage and suffering caused by it during the war".

It went on to talk specifically about the "undue hardship"—an amazing euphemism—that prisoners had suffered at the hands of the Japanese. There has been much debate about the implications of the treaty.

Article 14(a) stated that the

"resources of Japan are not presently sufficient, if it is to maintain a viable economy, to make complete reparation for all such damage and suffering".

As a result, compensation of £76 10s per prisoner was decided upon. Those who had served on the Burma railway received an extra £3 each. Times change, but even at today's value that is only £1,000 per prisoner.

Many people would look at the terms of that treaty and assume that it was a payment on account. The treaty talked about the "present inability" of the Japanese nation

*[Mr. Patrick Nicholls]*

to be able to make sufficient reparation. That explanation may appeal to those people whose views are driven by common-sense and humanity, but it has been accepted that, although it may have appeared to be a payment on account, the treaty represented the final legal obligation on the part of the state of Japan.

That point has been made on a number of occasions, and I do not question it now. It was made finally by my hon. Friend the Member for Morecambe and Lunesdale (Sir M. Lennox-Boyd), when he was a junior Foreign Office Minister, in reply to a debate in 1991. He responded to a speech by my right hon. and noble Friend Lord Braine of Wheatley, who has done so much to keep the matter in the public eye.

There is no doubt that the Japanese have met their legal obligations. However, there is a great deal more to life and death than legality; morality plays a part also. To his great credit, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister raised the matter directly with the Japanese Prime Minister in September 1993. That represented a departure from the way in which previous Governments of both main political parties had dealt with the issue.

In the relatively short time remaining, I do not think that it will be particularly useful to rehearse what has occurred since then. Suffice it to say that it was hoped that Japanese business men might take part in an initiative to provide compensation to POWs. However, that has finally fallen through. A number of former prisoners-of-war have filed suit in Japan for the sum of £14,000 each.

Ironically, that sum is based on the compensation paid to Japanese American internees for having been interned after Pearl harbour. However, the sufferings of being interned in America are light years away from what allied prisoners underwent. I cannot say, any more than can my hon. Friend the Minister of State, whether those legal moves will be successful.

I believe that the matter goes much further. The crux of the issue is that nobody who has been brought up in a Christian tradition could say for one moment that the present-day inhabitants of Japan must bear the guilt for what was done by their forefathers. However, if they do not bear the guilt, they do, at the very least, have a responsibility to face up to the consequences of what was done by their forebears. The charge that must be laid before the Japanese Government, representing, as do any Government, the people of their nation, is that they have not yet faced up to that responsibility.

To even talk about sums of money, be it £1,000, £14,000 or £14 million, seems a ludicrously inappropriate response to what has gone before, because one can never reverse what has happened. In my conversations and meetings with the Far East Ex-Prisoners of War Association in Torbay I have been told that what matters to them—God knows, they are the only ones who could know—is that there should be some tangible recognition by those who bear the responsibility for facing up to the consequences. If there was some recognition by the Japanese nation of what they had gone through, it would make their continued suffering in their twilight years much more bearable.

As I said, we have just celebrated—that is the right word—VE day. There is another day approaching on which I believe that the celebrations will be of a much more sombre tone, and that is VJ day—victory in Japan. The first VJ day was on 15 August 1945. Given what we know about the psyche of the Japanese nation, I cannot imagine that in any shape or form the Japanese people will find the celebrations easy. After all, it represented Japan's destruction as a military power, its humiliation and loss of face, and the de-deification of their emperor. It was a shattering experience for them, and it cannot be a day to which they are looking forward.

There may be one way in which the Japanese nation could look forward to that anniversary. Japan has marvellous potential, and is a force for good in the world. It generates great wealth and contributes to culture, as well as having generated many jobs throughout the United Kingdom. All that means that, in a real sense, it has a right to say that it should belong to the community of nations in the fullest sense, subject to one caveat; it must finally atone in the way that I have described for what was done in the past.

Surely it could be a cause for celebration in Japan as well if, before or on that date, the Japanese Government admit, apologise and atone for what was done in their name. Atonement would then be complete.

The contribution of Her Majesty's Government is simple—it is not to argue the legal point before the Japanese courts, because that would be entirely inappropriate, and it is certainly not to question whether the treaty has been implemented legally because it clearly has. To his great credit, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has taken a moral stand, and made representations to the Japanese Government.

I hope that what my hon. Friend the Minister of State will say today in his winding-up speech is that the Government have not forgotten the suffering of those who survive, and that they will continue to make and reinforce those moral points and representations until justice is done.

1.13 pm

**The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Alastair Goodlad):** I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) on his choice of subject for debate, and on his speech. As he said, we have spent the weekend commemorating the tumultuous events of 50 years ago in Europe. It has been a time to give thanks for the peace that we have enjoyed, and to remember the sacrifices of so many brave men and women who made that possible.

This anniversary has reminded us all that the conditions of peace and democracy that we now tend to take for granted in Britain were won only after a mighty struggle against tyranny and injustice. It has been a profoundly moving occasion, with important lessons for post-war generations.

My hon. Friend has reminded us that the victory and peace in Europe which we have been commemorating is only part of the story. The second world war did not end on 8 May 1945. It is true that Nazism and fascism had been decisively defeated in Europe, but the war against Japanese militarism was to continue for over three more cruel and hard-fought months. On 8 May, the Fourteenth Army had just recaptured Rangoon, after one of the most desperate and heroic campaigns of the war. There could by then be little doubt that the tide of the war in Asia and the Pacific was running towards victory over Japan, but no one knew how much longer it would continue, or with what cost.

The end of the war in the far east was devoutly desired by many, but by none can it have been so deeply yearned for as by those allied prisoners who were enduring captivity at the hands of the Japanese, and by their loved ones at home, whose personal agonies had, if anything, been made even worse by the end of the war in Europe. For the prisoners, it would mean the end to years of misery and maltreatment. The extracts from the work of the late Lord Slim and Laurents van der Post which were quoted by my hon. Friend gave us a small reminder of that suffering.

For many, the final liberation and release came too late. About a quarter of the allied prisoners in the far east died during the war, compared with 5 per cent. of those captured by the Germans. My hon. Friend has reminded us eloquently of the acts of wanton cruelty which were perpetrated on allied prisoners in the far east, for which hundreds of their gaolers were tried and executed after the war. This was not "victors' justice" as is sometimes claimed, but a natural remedy for acts of gross inhumanity.

I join my hon. Friend—and, I believe, all hon. Members—in expressing the most profound respect and sympathy for the former prisoners and their families. We shall have occasion to do so again more formally when we commemorate the 50th anniversary of VJ day—the true end of the war—on 19 and 20 August. I am glad that there will be a special service of remembrance in St. Paul's Cathedral for all the veterans of the far east war. It is right to remember today that, for the prisoners, for the men fighting in Burma and for many others in Asia and the Pacific, the war continued beyond 8 May, and so did their sufferings and sacrifices.

Most of us can picture the terrible conditions of captivity endured by the prisoners of war—the young soldiers, sailors and airmen—captured during the fall of Singapore or at other moments during the war. We can picture the forced labour on projects such as the Burma railway, as well as the random brutality that they endured. We have read the many heartrending written accounts of their appalling treatment or heard of it from their own lips.

We should not forget that whole families of civilians, including women and children, were interned when the Japanese overran east Asia. They were also held prisoner for the rest of the war. They suffered grievously, and I pay tribute to their courage and endurance.

My hon. Friend set out the case for the survivors to receive compensation as the 50th anniversary of the end of the war draws near. As my hon. Friend said, that is a cause long championed by my noble Friend Lord Braine, who is now president of the Japanese Labour Camp Survivors Association—the JLCSA. That association, together with the Association of British Civilian Internees—Far Eastern Region, has commenced legal action in the Tokyo courts against the Japanese Government.

As my hon. Friend said, they are seeking $22,000 in compensation for each former prisoner. Their first delegation visited Tokyo at the end of January, and our embassy was able to arrange a meeting for them with a representative of the Japanese Foreign Ministry, as well as providing an opportunity for them to take part in an act of remembrance for their former comrades at the Commonwealth war graves cemetery near Yokohama.

Those legal proceedings are now under way, and I am not in a position to intervene in them. For the British Government, the legal position is clear, and has been reaffirmed by successive Governments of both political complexions. The issue of compensation was legally settled by the peace treaty of San Francisco in 1951, and it is not open to us to raise the matter formally with the Japanese Government.

My hon. Friend stated that, under those arrangements, the amounts paid to former prisoners were small. He has alluded to the reasons for that at the time. Japan had been devastated by the war and the allies were determined not to repeat the mistakes—as they were then perceived—of the treaty of Versailles. An agreement was reached, and a treaty signed with Japan—today that remains the formal legal position. In that respect, the United Kingdom's position is no different from those of the other allied Governments, including the United States, Australia, Canada and New Zealand, who also had prisoners in Japanese hands.

The legal position has not prevented British Governments from representing to the Japanese authorities the strong emotions that the issue has continued to arouse in this country. We have made representations at all levels, including the highest. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has raised the matters informally with successive Japanese Prime Ministers.

It is fair to claim that, under my right hon. Friend's leadership, we have had more intensive discussions of the situation of the former prisoners with the Japanese Government than have our counterparts in the Governments of the other western allies. Throughout those discussions, we have encouraged the Japanese Government to work with us to identify solutions in the spirit of the modern co-operative relationship between our two countries.

The visit of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to Japan in September 1993 marked an important stage in that process. When he arrived, he found a new Japanese Government, with a greater will to address the issues than some of their predecessors. He was able to discuss the matter fully and constructively with his counterpart, Mr. Hosokawa. During those discussions, as was reported to the media, Mr. Hosokawa expressed

"his deep remorse as well as apologies for the fact that Japanese past actions had inflicted deep wounds on many people including former prisoners of war".

Both Prime Ministers confirmed the legal position which I have outlined. My right hon. Friend told Mr. Hosokawa that if, in future, the Japanese Government contemplated taking steps to redress the matter, it would be necessary for the position of those involved in Britain to be fully taken into account. He informed Mr. Hosokawa that we were also examining whether non-governmental measures would assist in solving the problem. Mr. Hosokawa agreed that that approach was worth examining.

The two Prime Ministers recognised that immediate solutions were not possible, but agreed to keep closely in touch about the matter. Those discussions at prime ministerial level have provided the basis for the work on the issue that has been subsequently undertaken by the two Governments.

The British Government followed up the reference to "non-governmental measures" by bringing together a small group of people under the chairmanship of Sir Kit

*[Mr. Alastair Goodlad]*

McMahon, a former deputy governor of the Bank of England, to explore the scope for a non-governmental charitable foundation. Our idea was that such a foundation might provide practical help to both former prisoners of war and civilian internees. We hoped that it might be possible to persuade Japanese companies and foundations to donate funds for that cause.

The basic medical and welfare needs of the former prisoners of war are already met by the national health service and the social security system, and, in particular, the war pensions scheme, but there is always room to do more. As my hon. Friend said, many of the survivors still suffer from medical problems deriving from the conditions of their captivity. It will surprise nobody when I say that the most prevalent are psychological problems relating to the horrors that they experienced.

I am aware that some former prisoners criticised the concept of a foundation, and said that they did not want what they called "Japanese charity". I believe that that was a misunderstanding. The Government were attempting to define an approach that might bring practical benefits to the former prisoners in a way that would recognise the special nature of their case.

Sir Kit McMahon, who undertook the work at the Government's request and received no personal benefit from it, handled the matter with great skill. In my judgment, nobody could have pursued it with a greater combination of determination and tact. I take this opportunity to thank him and the other members of his small committee for the time and effort they have devoted to the subject.

It was therefore a matter of regret that, when Sir Kit visited Japan last November, he found the reaction of the Japanese private sector uniformly negative. I should make it clear that the Japanese Government, while never formally committed to supporting our approach, were constructive and open throughout. But the message from Japanese companies and foundations could not have been clearer. Sir Kit concluded, and we accepted, that our approach was unlikely to succeed in those circumstances.

Meanwhile, with a new Prime Minister, Mr. Murayama, the Japanese Government had been giving more thought to the general issue of the nation's wartime responsibility. On 31 August last year, Mr. Murayama formally expressed remorse for Japan's wartime actions and announced a peace, friendship and exchange initiative. That will provide £650 million of Japanese Government money over 10 years. It will mainly be devoted to exchange visits and historical research.

The main focus of the programme will be on Japan's Asian neighbours, but the United Kingdom and other allied countries are specifically included, and we expect a substantial proportion of the funds to be spent in this country. The first year of the programme is to be the present financial year.

The programme does not meet the wishes of former British prisoners of war to receive compensation, but I do not believe that we should dismiss it out of hand. It provides evidence that the Japanese Government are sensitive to the need, as Mr. Murayama put it, to

"face up to the facts of history",

and to respond to the concerns felt in this country.

Similar evidence is provided by the recent improvements in the way in which the events of the second world war are described in the textbooks used in Japanese schools. Only if the facts of history are honestly taught to later generations can we hope that lessons will be learned.

I have been privileged to meet many of those who suffered as prisoners of the Japanese. Many of us count former prisoners among our constituents and, indeed, our friends. It is impossible to hear them recount their experiences without being deeply moved. Some, even now, prefer not to speak about what happened to them 50 years ago. Others have said to me that they cannot expect anyone who was not there to understand what it was like and what they feel about it now.

Even if we can never grasp the depth of emotion felt by those men and women, the simple recital of the facts of what they endured and witnessed cannot fail to make the most profound impression on us all. Instinctively, we feel humbled by it. Instinctively, we respect the feelings of those who have experienced such things. Instinctively, we are drawn to help. In that respect, the members of her Majesty's Government feel no differently from any other hon. Members or members of the British nation. That is why the Government have taken the steps I have described to try to find a solution. Those efforts continue.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister sent two messages to his Japanese counterpart, Mr. Murayama, last autumn. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has discussed the matter with the Japanese Foreign Minister, who is also the deputy Prime Minister, both when they met last September in Japan and on 19 April this year when they met in New York. In addition, there has been a series of discussions between senior officials about what might be done to help.

There is no doubt in the mind of the Japanese Government about the seriousness of the issue, or the widespread public sympathy in this country for the former prisoners. Today's debate will have underlined both those points. At the same time, the disappointing reaction to the proposal for a foundation shows the sensitivity and difficulty of trying to identify possible remedies in present circumstances. That is no excuse not to keep on trying. We are continuing our discussions of all those matters with the Japanese Government.

I cannot yet report to the House that we have arrived at an outcome that will satisfy all parties, but I can assure my hon. Friend and the House that we will continue those discussions and explore every possible avenue available to us for identifying further action in the non-governmental sector to enlarge upon the initiatives that have already been announced by the Japanese Government.

# Hospitals (Grampian Region)

1.29 pm

**Mr. Malcolm Bruce** (Gordon): I am glad to have the opportunity of raising this extremely important matter so soon after the Government announced—as far as I can gather, for the first time anywhere in the United Kingdom—that an entire hospital, including the provision of core clinical services, is to be put out to private bid to all comers. Before I deal with that point, I should like to address some of the background of how it came about.

In recent years, there has been a fundamental rationalisation of hospital services in Grampian. For those of us who represent rural constituencies, too often that has meant a closure of rural services and centralisation in Aberdeen. For example, the maternity unit in Inverurie in my constituency was closed and demolished. At that time there was a promise that a new GP or geriatric unit would be built on the site, but priorities changed and it has never materialised. In fact, the site is now a car park. Other maternity units were also closed at that time, although strenuous local campaigning ensured that we saved Keith, Huntly and Torphins.

Over the past year, hospitals for the mentally ill at House of Daviot and Kingseat in my constituency have closed. Most of the patients have been transferred to Aberdeen, some into the community, and 12 to a unit in the Jubilee hospital in Huntly. We are still awaiting a decision on the future of Woodlands hospital for the mentally ill, after a controversial and badly mishandled public consultation. In fact, along with the hon. Members for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) and for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Robertson), I met the Minister of State. We called on him to reconsider plans to close Woodlands and transfer to a new site to be built on the Cornhill site, and to come forward instead with plans to redevelop the site to meet the needs of the long-term mentally ill requiring permanent care or rehabilitation.

There is concern that we have heard nothing further about the proposal. If there is anything that the Minister can do to update us, or at least if he can say when an announcement will be made, I should be grateful.

More recently, there has been a welcome if limited recognition by health care providers in the north-east that there is strong demand for local community hospitals. Inverurie is lucky to have one. A review of the range of services that could be added to the hospital is still under consideration. Huntly has had a welcome investment in upgrading the Jubilee hospital. There is a growing campaign, backed by local doctors, for a community hospital to be provided in Ellon, where the former hospital was closed years ago and made into the golf clubhouse. Since that time, the community of Ellon has trebled if not quadrupled.

The health board has said that it recognises the demand. It has written to me, following consultations with GPs, stating the sort of provision that is being considered for Ellon. It suggests that it would include in-patient care, post-acute rehabilitation, respite care, rehabilitation, palliative and terminal care, day care, obstetric care limited to the post-natal phase, specialist out-patient clinics and home care support. The board went on to say that a Grampian-wide services review identified the potential for such a facility in Ellon.

However, it had other commitments first, including the replacing of the Woodlands hospital and potentially on a reprovision in Stonehaven. It is of concern to me that the announcement a couple of weeks ago about Stonehaven could further delay provision there and, consequently, have a knock-on effect on making progress towards commitment to a community hospital in Ellon. I am concerned about what was done, the way it was done and the knock-on effects elsewhere.

This time last year, Stonehaven saw the announcement by Grampian Healthcare trust in its business plan—that is no way to make announcements about the future of hospitals—that Arduthie and Woodcot in Stonehaven were to be closed. That announcement was sweetened with a pledge to build a new community hospital. I understand that, in accordance with that, towards the end of last year, Grampian Healthcare submitted plans—I have copies—for a new 47-bed hospital to be built on the site of Arduthie hospital at a cost of £2.4 million, which was based on the Scottish health executive's own standard costings.

That hospital would have replaced 77 beds that are currently provided by the two hospitals, which have a total full-time equivalent of 130 staff. The proposed new hospital is to include casualty services, 16 long-stay geriatric beds, 12 psycho-geriatric beds, 17 GP beds and two post-natal beds, and it would be similar to the community hospital in Peterhead, in the constituency of the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond).

Grampian Healthcare must have been wondering at the delay in responding to its proposal, and indeed asking why it had not heard. It was as stunned as anyone when a press release was issued by the Scottish Office last month, stating that the new community hospital, including its core clinical services, was to be put out to tender to all comers. That is a first for anywhere in the United Kingdom. I am advised by Grampian Healthcare that to date it has received no direct formal notification of that, just a copy of the press release sent through the post.

That is in spite of the fact that, in a letter to me last year about Ellon hospital, the chief executive of Grampian health board said that it was already working with Grampian Healthcare on replacing Woodlands hospital and potentially on a reprovision in Stonehaven. Well, not any more; it is not. Not only has Grampian Healthcare had only a copy of the press release but, when it attempted to obtain more information from the health board, it was told that it was not entitled to it; it is no different from any other potential bidder for the hospital.

There will now be a further delay while the specification for the new hospital is drawn up. I understand that that will take four to five months. Presumably, that specification will then be made available to all potential bidders—private and public sector. That takes the private finance initiative way beyond anything that has been tried so far in the health service, and indeed beyond what the Government's own guidelines specifically suggested would happen. New guidelines published in March stated in a key paragraph:

> "An option that many projects will need to explore is one in which the private sector would undertake the design, building, financing and operation of the non-clinical services."

That was a new departure in March, and in April we had the entire hospital clinical services—nursing services, doctors and all the paramedics—being put out to tender: design, build and operate.

*[Mr. Malcolm Bruce]*

As far as I can ascertain, the closest that anywhere has come to that situation is Morriston hospital in Swansea, where a cardiac centre attracted bids from three private health care companies, but the bid was finally awarded to the local trust. I am advised also that that was under active consideration in Portsmouth, until the chief executive of the trust committed suicide. In both cases—it is an important distinction—the initiative to involve the private sector came from the trust. All right, it was under encouragement from officials and Ministers, but it was not imposed, as is the case with the proposed community hospital for Stonehaven.

Most people who live and work in the north-east of Scotland and those who represent communities in the north-east of Scotland take pride in our communities as being forward looking, progressive and flexible, but we see no reason why we should be the guinea pigs for experiments that Ministers would not dare to try anywhere else, and certainly not south of the border.

Ministers and others contend that the hospital will still be in the NHS because the services will be provided free to patients. That is a spurious argument as ownership, control and operation will be in private hands. It is comparable to a local council putting homeless people into bed-and-breakfast hotels and saying that those hotels are in the public sector. It is absolute nonsense; they are privately owned businesses selling their services on commercial terms to the public sector. That is not just my opinion. I quote Mr. Jeremy Taylor, chief executive of Grampian Healthcare trust:

"If the services go to a private company it will not be NHS services, it will be a private service."

In those circumstances, it is difficult to see how quality can be assured, complaints effectively pursued or costs saved other than by cutting corners, staffing levels, pay or probably all three. Private sector finance may be appropriate for the property. That is a matter of debate and it has been recognised that it may be a practical compromise involving the private sector, but it is not appropriate for core clinical services. The Government deny that there was any intention to put core clinical services in private hands and their own guidelines specifically limited the private funding initiative to non-clinical services.

Not surprisingly, the announcement has outraged the local community. I am advised that last night Stonehaven community council passed the following resolution:

"The decision of the community council is that we strongly oppose the measure that the Government is to take over the NHS in Stonehaven and we shall do everything in our power to oppose it."

A number of relevant local interest groups were at that meeting. Local Liberal Democrats collected more than 2,000 signatures in the town on Saturday alone, to a petition calling for the retention of Stonehaven hospital services within the NHS.

If an entirely new hospital is to be owned and run by a private company, it will not be an NHS hospital in any terms that the public understand. Likely bidders could include construction companies, organisations such as BUPA, breweries, property companies and almost anybody from public companies to private individuals—possibly, last week's lottery winner.

It is preposterous for the Government to suggest that they are not transferring fundamental national health service assets to the private sector. That is borne out by the fact that potential bidders will have to get their own legal advice as to their likely liabilities under the transfer of undertakings directive. As the House knows, that has already caused the Government considerable embarrassment and it may deter some people from making a bid. If potential bidders depend on lower staffing levels, they may subsequently have to pay for all the contractual obligations for workers whose contracts they amend or terminate.

All that preparation spells nice work for lawyers. The more bidders there are, the more counsel's opinions will have to be sought and the more consultants will be involved in the preparation of bids. That is characteristic of the Government. Far from cutting down bureaucracy, they have increased it. They have also increased the complexity of supervising the service and securing public accountability. They have created an enormous expansion in publicly funded consultancies and they have expanded the bureaucracy necessary to supervise a much more complicated way of delivering services.

There is no difference of opinion about the practicalities of what we want. We want new and improved community hospitals in Grampian. I certainly want improvements in Inverurie and a new hospital in Ellon. The population is growing faster than anywhere else in the country. I can provide figures that show that the population of Grampian is estimated to grow from 506,100 in 1990 to 517,409 in 2001. The population over 75 is estimated to increase from 32,063 to 36,063. There are comparable figures for Kincardine and Deeside and for Gordon. It is a general characteristic. We need the services; our populations demand them and they are not being delivered fast enough.

The Government's change in ideology and their desire to drive an experiment through in north-east Scotland mean that a hospital that could have been started this year will be delayed for another year—just to test the Government's ideology.

The decision was announced without public consultation, without consulting Grampian health board or Grampian Healthcare and certainly without consulting local doctors, who would be the main users of the hospital. It is a matter of treating public opinion with total, absolute and utter contempt and showing no interest in getting an input from the people who will ultimately manage, deliver, control and secure the service for patients, and indeed, value for money for the taxpayer.

I know, having spoken to them recently, that local doctors in Ellon are anxious to know how long they will have to wait for outline plans to become a firm promise. They are not keen on Stonehaven becoming the next guinea pig.

As I have said, there is room for private finance in aspects of the health service if there are genuine benefits, but the proposals are a step too far. They take the NHS out of Government hands and further from effective public accountability. I assure the Minister that it will be a long, bitterly fought battle.

1.45 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton):** First, I would like to answer the question that the hon. Member

for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) asked about Woodlands. My noble and learned Friend the Minister of State recently met relatives of the people cared for at Woodlands and local Members of Parliament to hear their views at first hand. Before reaching a decision on the proposals, the Secretary of State will wish to be satisfied that the alternative model of care proposed is geared to meeting patients' individual needs, whether care is provided in the community or in a hospital setting. That matter remains under consideration.

We have heard a certain amount today about perceived threats to the NHS, about privatisation—by either the back door or the front door—and about the concept of free health care being undermined by the possible involvement of the independent sector in the provision of services.

The proposals for Stonehaven are certainly not about privatisation. They are about seeking to achieve a high-quality, responsive service, tailored to the needs of the local community. Let me be quite clear that the health board, as purchaser of health care services in Grampian, is leading the exercise and will continue to do so. The board will set and monitor standards and pay for the service, as it does at present.

Let me say what I believe the NHS is about. It is primarily about patient care and putting the interests of patients before all other considerations.

**Mr. Robert Hughes** (Aberdeen, North): Will the Minister give way?

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** No. I must answer the points raised by the hon. Member for Gordon first.

The NHS is about providing that care free at the point of delivery to those who need it, and ensuring that the best possible quality of care and treatment is delivered in the best possible facilities in the most efficient and cost-effective way.

Despite the alarmist and somewhat misleading press reports about Grampian health board's announcement that it intends to put hospital services in Stonehaven out to open tender, nothing in the board's proposals is inconsistent with the principles that I mentioned.

It may be helpful if I put the record straight by outlining the background to what is now proposed in Stonehaven, which is in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch). He has taken an assiduous interest in the matter ever since he was elected. He has repeatedly been to see my noble and learned Friend the Minister of State and regularly written to him urging a resolution.

There are at present two hospitals in Stonehaven—Arduthie and Woodcot—providing GP-managed acute beds, long-stay services for the elderly, casualty and other therapeutic support services. Both hospitals are old and no longer provide an ideal base for modern hospital care. Neither is suitable for development to meet future service needs.

Grampian Healthcare NHS trust, which currently provides the services from those hospitals, recognised the need for change and highlighted its intention to modernise services in its business plan published early in 1994.

The trust also carried out an option appraisal in 1994 with the close co-operation of Grampian health board, which is responsible for assessing need, planning services and purchasing them on behalf of the board's resident population. Representatives of the local community were also involved in the process.

The appraisal examined a number of options, ranging from the status quo through modification of one or both the existing hospitals to provision of a new hospital. The conclusion was that a new hospital, to be built on the existing Arduthie site and designed to replace both existing hospitals, was the best way forward.

Having reached that conclusion, the trust submitted its appraisal and recommendations to the Scottish Office. There are two main reasons for the Scottish Office being involved. First, new hospitals have to be paid for and any proposals that might involve investment of NHS resources must be considered in the context of competing bids for capital development funded elsewhere in Scotland. Secondly, any proposals to close existing hospitals must be consulted on publicly by the health board and ultimately approved by the Secretary of State.

On the first point, my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer made it clear in his November 1994 statement that no public sector capital projects would be approved unless the scope for involving the private sector had been fully explored. In discussing the recommendations made in the trust's option appraisal, the Scottish Office and Grampian health board agreed that that should be done in seeking to secure a new hospital for Stonehaven.

The object of the exercise would be, without being prescriptive in any way, to invite potential providers to say how they would provide the new hospital and to establish whether there were previously unconsidered and perhaps innovative ways of doing so. It would also help to establish clearly the solution that best met the health care needs of the people of Stonehaven, while offering the best value for money.

With the agreement of my noble and learned Friend the Minister of State, the health board has been asked to draw up a detailed specification of the services that it wants to purchase in Stonehaven, and thereafter to invite tenders from a range of organisations for providing the new hospital. It will be open to the Grampian Healthcare trust, other NHS trusts and the independent sector to bid for the contract separately, or in conjunction with each other or general practitioners. It will also be open to those organisations to bid for all or part of the service.

On 26 April, Grampian health board announced that it had been asked to proceed in that way, indicating that it would start work immediately on preparing the specifications—which, on its present timetable, it expects to complete by the autumn. Thereafter, the tendering process would begin. The board's aim is to be in a position to make a decision on the bids by the end of April 1996.

The board publicly stated that it would work closely with local GPs and with the local community and its representatives to establish the nature of services required at the new hospital before preparing the service specification. Mechanisms will be put in place to enable members of the public to comment individually if they wish. There can be no doubt that the views of health care professionals and of users of the service will be fully taken into account.

*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]*

That is where things stand. No decisions on who will provide the new hospital in Stonehaven in the future have yet been taken, and it seems wrong to me to speculate on the likely implications for health care services in Stonehaven before that point has been reached.

It might be helpful if I outline what those proposals mean and do not mean. They mean that a new hospital will be provided in Stonehaven—my noble and learned Friend has already made that clear. They offer the opportunity of providing a new hospital earlier than might be possible under a conventional NHS solution, if the private sector shows interest in building it. They will ensure that all possible options for providing a modern service geared to the people of Stonehaven's needs are fully explored. They will provide the opportunity for the local community to be involved in determining their own needs, through the board's intention to consult on the preparation of its specification and the consultation that will be required before either of the existing hospitals can close.

The proposals do not mean that people will be asked to pay for services. We remain committed to providing health care free at the point of delivery. The proposals do not represent a fundamental change of policy compared with existing arrangements. General practitioners currently provide the services at the existing hospitals and will continue to do so at the new hospital. Private sector involvement in the provision of long-stay services for the elderly and other care groups is already well established.

The proposals do not mean a reduction in the quality of service. The objective is to identify the best way of providing those services. The health board will remain responsible for specifying the service requirements. We expect the board to be rigorous in monitoring quality and standards through its contract with whatever provider is successful in the tendering process.

The proposals do not mean a wholesale move away from provision of health care services by the NHS. We are committed to ensuring that people have access to high-quality, cost-effective services funded through the NHS wherever they happen to live. Each proposed new service development will continue to be considered in the context of best meeting the needs of the people to be served.

The proposals do not automatically mean that services in Stonehaven will be provided by the private sector. Once all the options have been appraised, a conventional NHS solution may yet turn out to be best. Grampian Healthcare has welcomed the proposed approach and is clearly in a strong position to submit a competitive bid. The proposals do not cast any doubts on the quality of the service currently provided by Grampian Healthcare staff. Their skills and dedication are not in question, and they will also be a powerful weapon in the trust's armoury in preparing any bid.

Inviting bids from a wide range of potential providers and minimising the restrictions on what they are asked to say they can provide, or the manner in which they can provide it, will ensure that providers have the scope to develop innovative solutions to delivering the best possible services in terms of quality and value for money.

**Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** We have heard a great deal of civil service speak. Will not the Minister acknowledge that the proposals for Stonehaven are a step further than anything proposed anywhere else in the United Kingdom? Despite the Minister's remarks, it is not a question of inviting providers to ensure that they secure the maximum public participation. It is a question of putting the entire hospital out to bids from all comers. In those circumstances, when the hospital could be owned entirely by a brewery or anybody else, it is difficult to see how the palliatives that the Minister mentioned can be secured. If that is the way that the NHS is going, can he really believe and maintain that the service is safe in his hands?

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Yes. What matters is that the best possible services are provided to consumers in the best possible manner. That will certainly happen. Of course the health board has the right to monitor closely and to enforce the terms of the specification. If they were broken by anybody, the board would be in a position to take the necessary remedial steps immediately. I would expect it to do so. It is the board's duty to make certain that the highest possible standards are maintained, which is in the best interests of consumers.

The hon. Gentleman called for this debate under the general heading of new hospital provision in Grampian. The city of Aberdeen already enjoys the benefits afforded by a hospital in a central location at Foresterhill, which provides for the majority of acute service needs.

**Mr. Alex Salmond** (Banff and Buchan): Will the Minister give way?

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** No. I must explain the general position.

The existence of Foresterhill has not prevented our approving capital expenditure of £9 million in recent years further to service provision at Aberdeen royal infirmary and a further £21 million to facilitate rationalisation of acute and other services in the city and beyond. Only two weeks ago, my noble and learned Friend opened the new infection unit at the infirmary—the first of its kind in Scotland and the first to be incorporated within an acute teaching hospital. In the mental health sector, investment of £29 million has made the Royal Cornhill one of the most modern hospitals of its kind in the United Kingdom.

Outwith Aberdeen, a major redevelopment and expansion of Dr. Gray's hospital in Elgin, costing some £22 million, will ensure that the people of Moray have ready access to a wide range of hospital services, many of which they would previously have had to travel to Aberdeen or Inverness to obtain. Peterhead cottage hospital has also been completely rebuilt at a cost of £4.4 million and is now a fine example of a modern community hospital providing a range of services in a local setting.

**Mr. Salmond:** Will the Minister give way now?

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** If the hon. Gentleman has a question about Peterhead, I shall answer.

**Mr. Salmond:** I actually want to ask a question on the subject of the debate. The Minister mentioned the role of the Under-Secretary, the hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch). Was that hon. Gentleman consulted in any way before the initiative was launched—or was he kept in the dark, like the rest of us? That is a simple question, so may we have a straight answer?

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** If the hon. Gentleman is seeking to get me to reveal private and confidential discussions between my hon. Friend and

other members of the Government, the answer is that they remain confidential. My hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside has been foremost in putting the interests of his constituents first on every conceivable occasion.

Capital expenditure of more than £100 million has been approved for hospital building or improvement in Grampian since 1979. I do not see that as an indictment of the Government's record. On the contrary, I see it as a clear indication of our commitment to ensuring that the people of Grampian enjoy modern, efficient hospital care.

I am confident that the NHS is alive and well in Grampian. We are committed to it remaining so. Our first priority, which the current proposals for Stonehaven are intended to support, is to ensure that NHS users in Grampian and elsewhere in Scotland enjoy the kind of responsive, high-quality services that they are entitled to expect.

Grampian has made rapid and effective progress in developing care in the community and in ensuring that people are only—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse):** Order. Time is up.



## Executive Power

2 pm

**Mr. Graham Allen** (Nottingham, North): This week we have been celebrating the victory 50 years ago of democracy over fascism. Sadly, however, there has been little contemplation in the Chamber, no debate on the fundamentals of democracy, the clash of philosophies or even a step back to take stock and discuss the future of our political system. In a different context, the director general of the BBC recently called on the media to devote as much time to reflection as to antagonism—words which could equally apply to our own Parliament, the forum of the nation.

It is Parliament's failure to carry out a serious and regular MOT on our democracy which so vividly illustrates that our legislature, and even its agenda, is the creature of the Executive. In no other western nation is the Executive, the Government, so dominant. It is as if the democratic revolutions of the United States, France and elsewhere have passed us by, and the keystones of democracy, a separation of powers and checks and balances, are irrelevant to our own country. Hence, we have a unitary state rather than pluralist one, stagnant one-track politics instead of an active diversity which continually guarantees and renews our political evolution. The textbooks may say that Parliament is meant to be sovereign, but the reality is that Parliament is controlled by the Executive and, for our country, that spells Executive sovereignty.

In the United Kingdom, the leader of the Executive, in the shape of the Prime Minister, controls the appointment of the Cabinet, commands a majority of the legislature, appoints the members of the judiciary and the second Chamber and controls the spending and even the structure of local authorities, all uninhibited by a Bill of Rights or a written constitution. Those untrammelled powers would make a starling salivate and, in the wrong hands, have wrought massive, uncheckable destruction on our social fabric. The Thatcher years proved beyond doubt that our democratic culture, good as it is, must be bolstered by democratic institutions resilient to those who would seek to abuse our democracy.

The democratic socialist answer must be to replace one-track politics with pluralism and to hear all the voices, some of which may be our salvation. I am particularly pleased that the Labour party recently, for the first time in its history, decided to put such a commitment into its constitution—a commitment to

"an open democracy, in which Government is held to account by the people; decisions are taken as far as practicable by the communities they affect; and where fundamental human rights are guaranteed".

That is now the commitment of my party. I hope that the Conservative party, should it ever have a constitution, will adopt a similar view.

My party is now pledged, through successive leaders and successive decisions of our party conference, to create a new democratic settlement, including a Bill of Rights for British citizens, an elected second Chamber, free local authorities, assemblies for the regions and nations of our union, a diversity of electoral systems, an effective House of Commons, an accountable Europe and a revitalised judiciary. The next Labour Government will be remembered for nothing unless it is remembered for

*[Mr. Graham Allen]*

changing for good the way in which we govern ourselves. The whole of that agenda is, in essence, designed to tackle the problems of unrestrained Executive power in the United Kingdom. We can do that in two ways—first, by putting in place the checks and balances that are central to a separation of powers, and, secondly, by directly curbing the size and scope of the Executive itself.

I should make it clear that in referring to Executive power, I refer specifically to that authority nominally found in the Crown, but in reality exercised by the Government of the day. I do not refer here to the residual power of the Queen and the royal family, or to their status as royalty. Some of the most ardent centralisers and woolliest thinkers in that area would have us attack the soft target of the Queen rather than confront the key sources of political power. It is the inherited use by Government of that Crown or prerogative power which lies at the heart of the strength and overdominance of the Executive. As my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) recently said:

"The prerogative is all about the power of Government over the people and virtually nothing to do with the power of the people over Government."

The reality is that today a massive hinterland of power is exercised by Executive decree without accountability to Parliament, and sometimes without even the knowledge of Parliament. That is extra-parliamentary activity writ large indeed. In practice, after using Executive power in a high-profile policy area, Governments will often seek to come to the House to give some parliamentary window dressing to a decision already taken in the corridors of Whitehall and No. 10 Downing street. That window dressing, however, limited though it is, is entirely voluntary and at the whim of the Government rather than a right of Parliament—a right of the legislature.

A recent example was the renewal of the royal charter of the BBC. The Government will kindly allow the House some sort of debate. They will find a contrivance so that Members of this Chamber and the other place can discuss the issue. However, we shall not be allowed to amend or reject the charter because that comes under the royal prerogative.

In certain areas of foreign policy, such powers are absolute. For example, agreeing to treaties is currently a matter for prerogative power, not for Parliament. It can be argued that the Maastricht treaty need not even have come before the House until consequential legislation was due. Treaty after treaty is concluded without the formal consent of Parliament. Foreign policy as a whole is almost a democracy-free zone, free of democratic control and accountability.

Powers devolving from the Crown, free from parliamentary scrutiny, are vested in Ministers and go virtually unchallenged. The Scott inquiry has revealed that Ministers can even write their own sick notes to mask errors and omissions concerning matters such as by the use of public interest immunity certificates. It is here that parliamentarians need to refocus the debate.

The threat is not to a mythical parliamentary sovereignty from Europe or Maastricht. The focus must be on restoring the strength of Parliament in the face of its domination by Executive sovereignty. Again, as parliamentarians, our task is to expose what little power Parliament has in the face of Government by Executive decree.

The Executive is generally free to bind the country under international law regardless of the express wishes of Parliament. These powers have effectively privatised us out of our democracy and all of them need to be placed under the public ownership of our representative institutions. Such powers should no longer be the personal and private domain of Ministers; there should be accountability to us in the House.

Treaties can be negotiated only by the Executive—we all realise that—but the power to ratify them should lie with our democratically elected representatives, as it does in virtually all other democratic cultures in the western world. Going to war is another deeply significant issue, but that, too, is a matter for prerogative power—not for the House, but for Whitehall and No. 10—when it should be in the parliamentary domain. Although it is usually debated after the event, no Government of any political colour have a duty to obtain the consent of Parliament before going to war, as has been illustrated by the Gulf war, the Falklands war and the war in Bosnia.

I accept that, in a national emergency, the Government may be forced to act without the immediate consent of the House, but there should be safeguards to ensure that, if British service men and women are sent into battle, there will be adequate debate about the reasons for the decision. Formal ratification by Parliament of Executive action is the minimum that should be accepted in a modern democracy. The technical device of squaring one or two members of the Privy Councillors freemasonry is no longer an appropriate substitute for public scrutiny by democratically elected institutions.

The Privy Council is one of the many devices that have been used successfully over the years to assimilate politicians of all parties into the Executive culture. The seduction of "One day, all this will be yours" must be replaced with a clear moral and political stand for democracy; without that, the core of our democracy will remain on shaky ground.

The bible of our unwritten constitution, "Erskine May", says:

"The prerogatives of the crown, in connection with Parliament, are of paramount importance. The legal existence of Parliament results from the exercise of the Royal Prerogative. To a Queen's writ the House of Commons owe their election as representatives of the people."

Similarly, Parliament is dissolved by the Queen, acting on the advice of the Prime Minister but using prerogative powers that cannot even be questioned in the House.

Honours are doled out without a nod to our elected representatives. Institutions as important as the BBC—which I have already mentioned—and the civil service are the creation of Executive power, with no statutory basis agreed by Parliament. Given such a system, and the arrogance of Ministers grown fat on 16 years of unchecked authority, we are beginning to see developments such as that involving the current Home Secretary, who was caught red-handed trying to abolish the criminal injuries compensation scheme without parliamentary consent. But for the vigilance of the Fire Brigades Union and others—and the Law Lords—he would have got away with it.

The accountability of Ministers to Parliament, under statute, is already tenuous enough; accountability without statute is virtually impossible. In a modern democracy, it is no longer sufficient for matters of such potential importance to be dealt with on the basis of hearsay and secrecy. We need to define—openly, publicly and in writing—the institutions of the state, their role and their inter-relationships. That can best be done by means of a systematic definition and creation under statute of all the most important prerogative powers. We must bring the rule of law—statute law—to the conduct of Government.

That has occurred quite recently in the case of the security services, and civilisation as we know it has not collapsed because the security services now operate under statute law rather than prerogative power. If that example is extended to the other activities that I have mentioned—treaty making, war, the civil service and the dissolution of Parliament—it will necessarily end the vagueness surrounding such powers, and restrict their exercise by increasing their transparency and the accountability of those involved.

Although these immense extra democratic powers will fall to the Labour party after the next general election, the acid test of our commitment to a devolved and pluralist democracy will be whether we resist the temptation to abuse them as the current Government have and instead ensure that they are legitimised in statute law and irrevocably placed within the democratic arena. It is conceivable that the incoming Government could introduce all the other elements of our democratic agenda, but then fail to tackle Executive power. If we do not do that, we shall merely count the days before the centre of a unitary state—perhaps still under the control of a Labour Government—erodes the effects of a wider reform package, and regathers effective control.

The unitary state, controlled by an unchecked Executive, is a political system that has demonstrably failed in the 1980s and 1990s; it must be replaced by a pluralist, democratic system. That is the best way in which Parliament and parliamentarians could honour those who, 50 years ago, gave their lives for our democracy.

2.16 pm

**The Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service and Science (Mr. John Horam):** The hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) has done a service to the House, but he is not right in saying that the subject has never been debated. It was debated two years ago, in 1993, and some of his arguments—as well as some of those that I shall advance in rebuttal—were aired then. The matter has also been touched on in subsequent debates, so it is not an entirely debate-free area.

The hon. Gentleman deserves considerable credit for producing, in January, a pamphlet entitled "Reinventing Democracy". It is a major work, including everything about democracy except the kitchen sink. I was slightly disappointed to see that Madam Speaker was not in the Chair—I am making no personal reference to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker—as I intended to say, "We authors, Ma'am", since I have also produced a pamphlet, though on a different subject: it is called "The Competitiveness of Britain", and it was published about a year before the hon. Gentleman's.

I am aware of the hard work and lack of appreciation involved in the production of such pamphlets, and I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his production of a volume which—having read it—I consider robust and coherent. I must add, however, that although I agreed with a great deal that the hon. Gentleman wrote about the procedures of the House in the section concerning parliamentary democracy, I had to dissent from many of his conclusions. That will not surprise him.

As the hon. Gentleman knows, having conducted research for his pamphlet and the debate, the powers of the royal prerogative—as he pointed out, we are talking of the prerogative as exercised by the Government, not any residual powers of the royal family—have a long history. They are, in effect, a residual item: as parliamentary power spread over almost the whole area of authority, that was left by custom and practice because it was not felt necessary to take it over. Some rather piquant phrases are used: "the undefined residue", for instance, and "the attenuated remnant". We are talking about a small element of our total power structure—in fact, all that is left following the gigantic spread of parliamentary power which has rightly taken place over the centuries.

Secondly, despite the hon. Gentleman's remarks, things have not changed a lot since 1979. One would think that, somehow or other, there had been a great diminution of parliamentary power over the Executive since 1979. In fact, the contrary is the case: things were much the same before 1979 as they are now. The hon. Gentleman mentioned that only last year the intelligence services were brought within statutory control. That example shows that the element of prerogative has been reduced in this Government's lifetime. Far from standing still and being no better than the last Labour Government, we are considerably better in some respects. We have recognised where in some degree it is necessary to take over the prerogative, and we have done so.

Thirdly, despite the existence of this small residual item of Executive power, Parliament is still sovereign. Parliament's power is unlimited. We can take whatever power we want. That is the prerogative of the House. It is what parliamentary sovereignty is all about. We can enforce such measures, as far as our writ runs. It is true that small items of the prerogative still exist, but they are subject to the overriding power of Parliament, which we can exercise at any time.

Fourthly, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." That is part of the reason why many items still remain as part of the prerogative and are exercised by the Executive. It simply makes sense for them to remain so. The issuing of passports, for example, is done by prerogative, and not on a statutory basis. Whichever party is in power, the Government of the day sometimes need the discretion not to issue a passport for certain reasons. That is well understood. It is handled in a sensible and sensitive way. I—and, I am sure, the hon. Gentleman—have never had any particular problems as a result of the practical application of that prerogative.

It is not necessary to bung up the House of Commons with legislation designed simply to change the formality of such things when in practice they work well as they are. As the hon. Gentleman said in his pamphlet, quite enough legislation goes through the House already. We do not want even more going through, which would be designed nominally to change the status of something that in practice is working extremely well. The hon. Gentleman will face that problem if he tries to implement his pamphlet.

*[Mr. John Horam]*

At the end of the pamphlet, the hon. Gentleman helpfully gives a programme for the first, second, third and fourth years of a potential Labour Government—an ambitious thing to do, as we may never get a Labour Government. The pamphlet has already got the first four years mapped out. He wants four items to be put through in the first year. Frankly, if he were able get all that through, it would produce parliamentary gridlock. Little else could be passed.

The hon. Gentleman was not a Member of the House when the Labour Government tried to put through Scottish devolution. If he consults his colleagues who were in the House at that time, he will find that an immense amount of effort goes into even one small constitutional change of that sort. He wants major constitutional change on many different fronts. He would find that that would have a time-consuming effect that is out of all proportion to what he may imagine.

The hon. Gentleman is perhaps over-egging the pudding rather a lot when he talks about the unaccountable nature of Executive power. In fact, it is accountable. Changing it would mean changing only some of the formal positions involved, not the reality of how power is exercised. The hon. Gentleman said that in some sense Ministers were not properly accountable for actions under the prerogative. He is clearly mistaken about that. I should like to make that point in case any misunderstanding exists.

Wade and Bradley, the Bible, if I may put it like that, of administrative law is unambiguous on that point. It states:

"Except in those special circumstances where prerogative powers involve the personal discretion of the sovereign"—

the hon. Gentleman will agree that we are not talking about that—

"prerogative powers are exercised by or on behalf of the Government of the day. For their exercise, just as for the use of statutory powers, Ministers are responsible to Parliament."

In practical terms, that means that, even where Ministers exercise prerogative powers or powers under the prerogative, they are still answerable to the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration. One can make a complaint against a Minister for maladministration, whether he exercises powers under statutory obligations or under a prerogative. Similarly, the exercise of the royal prerogative is judicially reviewable—provided, of course, that the matter in question is justiciable. On those grounds, Ministers are accountable for the use of the prerogative, just as much as they are under statutory law.

The hon. Gentleman made a number of points about the use of the prerogative by the Government. One particular point involved the British Broadcasting Corporation and royal charters. The BBC would be reluctant to have the position changed, because one of the things that protect the independence of such institutions is the fact that they exist under royal charter. In many ways, that is a better protection than being brought under statute law and therefore being susceptible to changes following political decisions in the Houses of Commons or the House of Lords.

The hon. Gentleman made the point that, in emergencies in relation to war and making treaties, Governments must act, but more so in relation to war. He said that there should be a process of ratification subsequent to decisions being taken. That is a poor substitute for what, in practice, has happened.

The hon. Gentleman began by recalling that this weekend we celebrated the 50th anniversary of VE day. With great affection and gratitude, he remembered the events of 50 years ago, but he will also recall the events of 55 years ago, when the last war started. Matters were determined in the House. The Prime Minister was changed as a consequence of pressure from the House of Commons, and the whole conduct of the war possibly changed because of the debates that took place here.

Post hoc ratification is no substitute for the sort of debates that should and do take place in the House, as they did in the second world war and, subsequently, during the wars in the Falkland Islands, Bosnia and the Gulf. In practice, the hon. Gentleman's demands are met by the sort of procedures that we traditionally follow in the House.

None of my hon. Friends would seriously agree with the hon. Gentleman that somehow or other treaties are agreed to in the House without any particular remonstrance or debate. We spent a great deal of time in Parliament discussing the Maastricht treaty, which I believe is branded on the souls of some of my hon. Friends who had to speak in those debates. They went on so long and it was a close run thing, as the hon. Gentleman is aware. No doubt the Opposition can defend their actions in that debate, although at times it seemed as though they were voting against what they believed in.

**Mr. Nigel Griffiths** (Edinburgh, South): The Minister is one to talk.

**Mr. Horam:** I can certainly defend my position on Maastricht. No one could seriously complain that there was a lack of debate on that. Similarly, other treaties that have come before the House have been thoroughly debated.

The current position is sensible. It has been improved, where possible, by the Government. The hon. Gentleman may be aware that even Al Gore's specialist advisers said the other day that this country is in the forefront of the world movement towards reinventing government. We can take credit for the fact that, with the possible exception of New Zealand, no other country and no other Government have done as much to reinvent government as our Government have done. We are well ahead of other countries in that regard.

I should be amazed if implementing some of proposals in the hon. Gentleman's pamphlet led to an improvement in democracy. At the heart of his proposals are no fewer than six different tiers of democracy—including not only parish, district and county councils, but regional assemblies and a European Parliament to which he would give additional initiative and powers. That would not be more democracy: it would be gridlock.

*It being half-past Two o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.*

# Oral Answers to Questions

## TRADE AND INDUSTRY

### Media Ownership

1. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his policy in respect of concentrations of ownership of the media. [21942]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs (Mr. Jonathan Evans):** The Government are currently reviewing their policy on media ownership and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage will make the Government's views known once that process has been completed.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** The Under-Secretary will be aware that, in a debate exactly a fortnight ago, hon. Members on both sides of the House expressed their concern about the serious implications of the Murdoch News Corporation's involvement in the proposed rugby super league. What steps have the Government taken to evaluate the implications of that development, especially for media coverage of British sport as a whole?

**Mr. Evans:** If a monopoly of televised rugby league emanates from any registrable agreement, that matter would be considered under the provisions of the Restrictive Trade Practices Act 1977, not under the monopolies legislation. In those circumstances, it would be for the Director General of Fair Trading to look into the new agreements. As I know that the hon. Gentleman has taken an exceptional interest in this matter, I am sure that he will draw his concerns to the attention of the director general.

**Mr. Fabricant:** Does my hon. Friend agree that there is a great deal of obsession in this place with News International, yet Longman Pearson, *The Guardian* group and Associated Newspapers all have a considerable degree of cross-media ownership covering newspapers, television and other media? Does he further agree that mechanisms exist—such as the Monopolies and Mergers Commission and the Office of Fair Trading—to ensure that there are no monopolies in the media?

**Mr. Evans:** I have already referred to the structure of our current competition law. However, within the context of the question asked by the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe), the whole matter of cross-media ownership is complex. The issues outlined by my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant) make that clear. For that reason, the whole matter is currently the subject of a review and it would be wrong of me to pre-empt its outcome.

**Mr. Wilson:** Does the Under-Secretary agree that my hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield has raised a subject of considerable importance relating to monopoly and, in particular, the coverage of British sport? I understand that, in the case of rugby league, there is a monopoly issue because the contracts will exclude non-Murdoch players from international competition. Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the implications of that go far beyond rugby league? Is it not time to send out a strong signal that the Government are not prepared to allow whole sports to be bought, with access to them then being conditioned by people whose interests are in the media rather than in the sport?

**Mr. Evans:** The question raises two distinct issues. The first relates to the review of cross-media ownership, and I have made it clear that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage is deeply involved in that. The Government will announce their policy at the appropriate time.

Within the context of the issue raised by the hon. Member for Wakefield, I have outlined the current structure of competition law. If the hon. Gentleman feels that he has real concerns which he believes should be raised in relation to other sports, I have suggested to him that he draw those concerns to the attention of the Director General of Fair Trading.

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** May I return my hon. Friend to the question of predatory pricing? If News International has 37 per cent. of the daily national newspaper market, and if the Director General of Fair Trading satisfies himself that a sustained price cut will increase the losses of *The Times*, why is it fair and reasonable to allow that media concentration to continue and to hit the other newspaper groups that are trying to compete in the broadsheet market?

**Mr. Evans:** I am aware of the concerns which my hon. Friend has outlined on previous occasions in relation to this issue. He will be aware that the Director General of Fair Trading is the appropriate person for considering allegations of predatory pricing. The director general looked at the issue when the pricing war between major national newspapers began, and it is a matter that will continue to excite his interest.

### British Gas

2. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions he has held with British Gas about levels of consumer satisfaction. [21943]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Energy (Mr. Richard Page):** Overall levels of consumer satisfaction are a matter for British Gas. Thirty-nine specific standards of service are regulated by the Office of Gas Supply.

**Mr. Jones:** Does the Under-Secretary think that British Gas's blind, elderly and disabled customers are happy with the service that they are getting, when the home advisory service which British Gas has provided up to now is being cut by 50 per cent.? Does he think that those customers will be satisfied with the fact that the British Gas chairman is giving himself a 75 per cent. pay rise?

**Mr. Page:** British Gas is not going to cut its services to the elderly and the blind, and it is in fact spending £170 million a year on those services. It also provides a gas care register. Ofgas has agreed some standards of service with British Gas, and British Gas has failed in three areas of service. For example, Ofgas wanted a level of 100 per cent. for the reading of meters for customers moving home, but British Gas has reached only 98.9 per cent.

A level of 100 per cent. was demanded for energy efficiency, but British Gas is getting only 99.8 per cent. British Gas is addressing those shortcomings.

**Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** In view of the soaring number of complaints, will the Under-Secretary join the Pensions Investments Research Consultants—an organisation that advises pension funds that hold £70,000 million in their funds—in condemning the soaring boardroom pay-outs at British Gas, which are in breach of the Institute of Directors' guidelines on best practice? Will the hon. Gentleman advise shareholders at the British Gas annual general meeting on 31 May to support resolution 13 on controlling the pay-outs and perks in the boardroom, as I shall be doing at that meeting? If not, why not?

**Mr. Page:** The Government have made our position clear on the pay of the directors of British Gas. We will await the report of the Greenbury committee. I hope that the pensioners connected with the PIRC are happy with the 21 per cent. reduction in gas prices since privatisation.

**Mr. Lidington:** Does my hon. Friend agree that gas consumers have every right to be pleased not only with the reduction in gas prices since privatisation but with the healthy profits being made by British Gas, taxation on which goes to help finance the improvements in public services to which the Government are committed?

**Mr. Page:** My hon. Friend makes a powerful point. Last year, British Gas contributed £504 million to the Treasury. That was a valuable contribution, and British Gas should be congratulated on that.

## Volvo Site, Workington

3. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what efforts are being undertaken by his Department with a view to help find an occupant for the Volvo site in Workington. [21944]

**Mr. Jonathan Evans:** Primary responsibility for finding a new occupant for the factory falls to the company and its agents. However, the local development organisations, together with Inward, the regional development organisation, and the Government office for the north-west are fully aware of the opportunities that the site has to offer. They continue to promote the site at every suitable opportunity.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** Will the Minister refer my comments to his departmental officials with gratitude for the work that they are doing in trying to market that very important site? Will he join me in reiterating that we have in Workington a 500,000 sq ft modern factory in an assisted area where European moneys are available? Anyone watching Parliament today who knows of a potential client should come forward as soon as possible.

**Mr. Evans:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for the generosity of his remarks about the work undertaken by Government officials. It may reassure him to know that I had a meeting with Inward last week at which that subject was at the top of the agenda. Inward is very much aware of the statements which have been made not just in this House but throughout the north-west by the hon. Gentleman, who has taken a leading role in seeking to promote the occupation of the site.

## Gas Supply

4. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will arrange to meet the chairman of British Gas to discuss gas supply. [21945]

**The Minister for Industry and Energy (Mr. Tim Eggar):** My right hon. Friend and I meet the chairman regularly to discuss a range of issues.

**Mr. Canavan:** Will the Minister demand an explanation from the chairman on why more than 16,000 disconnections were made last year because of fuel poverty and why the number of consumer complaints increased by 150 per cent. during the first quarter of this year compared with the first quarter of last year? Will the Minister instruct the chairman, the chief executive and all the other fat cats on the board of British Gas that it is high time that they put their house in order and started providing a better standard of service instead of lining their pockets with exorbitant salary increases and share options?

**Mr. Eggar:** The hon. Gentleman mentioned the current figure for disconnections but failed to mention that, some six years ago, just after privatisation, there were 61,000 disconnections a year, which shows that British Gas has improved its standard of service to those clients by a very high degree. Moreover, the standards with regard to the introduction of pre-payment meters have improved sharply. The 39 standards of service set out by the Office of Gas Supply have been met in full, with the exception of three specific services, two of which my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State referred to. British Gas has said publicly that it is committed to improving its standards further. If that is not enough for the hon. Gentleman, he should know that we shall introduce competition into the domestic gas market, which will almost inevitably lead to a reduction in prices for domestic consumers and an improvement in standards of service.

**Mr. John Marshall:** When my right hon. Friend meets the chairman of British Gas, will he congratulate him on the massive increase in investment since the industry was privatised, the massive increase in productivity and the substantial real terms reduction in prices? Does he agree that the snivelling comments of the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) show that the new Labour party is just the old Labour party writ large, with the same prejudices it has always had?

**Mr. Eggar:** I absolutely agree with my hon. Friend.

**Mr. Salmond:** Is it possible that the Minister is unaware that British Gas is now held in public odium and that, at the annual general meeting later this month, the British Gas board faces a revolt by small shareholders, not just on salaries but on a range of other issues? When will the Department of Trade and Industry stop waffling on about British Gas being a world-class company and recognise that it has created a privatised Frankenstein's monster that is now totally out of touch with its customers, shareholders and staff?

**Mr. Eggar:** British Gas is a world-class company and is winning business for Britain throughout the world. The hon. Gentleman should welcome that.

**Mr. Marlow:** Instead of making down-market and emotive allegations about Frankenstein's monsters,

privatisation and the rest of it, will my right hon. Friend tell my constituents, who have a real interest in this subject, what has happened to gas prices in real terms since privatisation and how those compare with prices before privatisation? Behind everything else, that is the issue that really matters to them.

**Mr. Eggar:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Gas prices have fallen by more than 20 per cent. in real terms since privatisation and by 15 per cent. when account is taken of the imposition of value added tax. Furthermore, standards of service have improved and the number of disconnections has fallen, which is concrete evidence of the success of our privatisation policy.

**Mr. O'Neill:** When the Minister sees the chairman, will he take account of the fact that the assurances which he gave in Committee on schedule 5 to the Gas Bill, that the changes were no different from those that would take place in any other privatisation legislation, will result in the prospect of a world-class company like British Gas abrogating its contracts on gas supply with a number of companies, both British and international? Does he realise that he is putting Government support behind the possibility of a major British company betraying undertakings that it has entered into faithfully with other companies, both British and worldwide, to take their supplies of gas at prices that were agreed some time ago?

**Mr. Eggar:** The point that was made in Committee with regard to schedule 5 was that there was a clear precedent for the allocation of existing contracts in such a position. The most recent precedent was the Gas Act 1986 and the previous one was in 1981, in the sale to Enterprise Oil.

As the hon. Gentleman said in Committee, and as I reiterated in that debate, it is appropriate that there should be commercial discussions between the producers and consumers of gas—in that case, between British Gas and several suppliers. That is what I believe that the hon. Gentleman said in Committee he wanted, and that is what I continue to want. I hope that there will be successful commercial discussions in the coming weeks.

### Rural White Paper

5. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what submissions his Department has made for inclusion in the proposed White Paper on the rural economy. [21946]

**The President of the Board of Trade and Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Michael Heseltine):** Officials in my Department are in close contact with the White Paper team and have been working with them to ensure that the interests of businesses in rural areas are fully represented.

**Mr. Colvin:** Does my right hon. Friend acknowledge that, although 23 per cent. of our population live in the countryside, only a small proportion work there, and that the more that can be done to encourage jobs alternative to agriculture, the better that is for our transport system and our rural economy as a whole? Will he support the proposal for the rural business unit, which would enable farmers and landowners to lump together for tax purposes not only their farming enterprises but alternative enterprises, which would do a great deal to encourage the alternative industrial use of redundant farm buildings?

**Mr. Heseltine:** My hon. Friend raises a very important point. I am aware of the proposal that has been made by the Country Landowners Association. I can assure him that, in the context of that proposal and of a wide range of other representations to enhance the wealth-creating potential of the countryside, my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food are giving the most urgent consideration to those matters.

**Mr. Rendel:** Will the President of the Board of Trade ensure that the White Paper demonstrates support for tele-cottages in rural areas, especially ones like that recently set up by the Lambourn Valley trade and tourism association in my constituency, with support from the Liberal Democrat-run county and district councils, and will he tell us how many other authorities are supporting tele-cottages at present?

**Mr. Heseltine:** I think the hon. Gentleman will recognise that the changing technological capabilities of people to work in outlying areas or at home are well understood by the Government and will play a significant part in the findings of the White Paper.

**Mr. MacShane:** The President may not be aware that in Rotherham 65 per cent. of the land area is rural and there is a very important small rural economy there, but how can any rural economy function without an efficient network of public transport? Bus deregulation and privatisation have ripped out the heart of bus transport and, if we continue with rail privatisation, there will be no rail transport to keep the rural economies alive.

**Mr. Heseltine:** The hon. Gentleman will know that there has been an improved arrangement and facility for rural buses, and that has been one of the advantages of changes that we have introduced.

**Mr. Ian Bruce:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Rural Development Commission and the Department of Trade and Industry are doing extremely good work in developing new businesses in the countryside? However, I wonder whether he could do more to ensure that other colleagues in other Departments make sure that we obtain the right planning permission and that we restore the right enterprise culture to the countryside, because that will ensure that we have a growing rural economy rather than a dying one.

**Mr. Heseltine:** My hon. Friend is right to press those arguments. As I said, the two colleagues in the Government who are responsible for that matter are taking the White Paper very seriously.

### Coal Industry

6. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what recent meeting he has had with owners of the newly privatised coal industry with regard to overall production and costs. [21947]

**Mr. Heseltine:** DTI Ministers have met representatives of successor coal companies on a number of occasions and a range of issues have been discussed. I invite the

hon. Gentleman to agree with me that there was nothing crooked in the arrangements that brought those companies into existence.

**Mr. Skinner:** There is one easy way to find out, is there not? The President of the Board of Trade has one story. "Panorama" and some other people, including myself and other Opposition Members, believe another story. He must do the decent thing and clean the matter up. Why does he not set up a fully independent public inquiry to find out the truth about the sequence of events that led to one of his friends, Richard Budge, getting the coal pits and then having £100 million knocked off the bid? Only an independent inquiry will be able to find out the truth.

**Mr. Heseltine:** I am glad that the hon. Member has not repeated the disgraceful allegations he made yesterday. What he does not understand is that all the papers relevant to this matter will be at the disposal of the National Audit Office and that it will be for it to determine whether any matters should be drawn to the attention of the Public Accounts Committee.

What I find utterly intolerable in the hon. Member's allegations is that he thinks that a Minister in my position has the power so to order civil servants in my Department that they would carry out the sort of activities of which he is accusing them and the Government. To suggest that the permanent secretary in my Department and all the civil servants involved would behave in the way suggested by the hon. Member is an intolerable abuse of the privileges of the House.

**Mr. David Evans:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that, since privatisation, jobs have been created in the mining industry every single day and coal is being produced more competitively? Does he not think it a bit rich that, when the lot opposite were in power from 1964 to 1970 and from 1974 to 1979, 313 pits were closed, with the loss of 230,000 miners' jobs? Is that what is meant by the new, caring, sharing Labour party of the lot opposite?

**Mr. Heseltine:** My hon. Friend, as so often, has hit the nail firmly on the head. The real determination of the Labour party is to try to obscure by smear the remarkable success of the privatised coal industry. That coal industry is seeing increases in productivity; sales of British coal overseas and increased profitability. It has kept open far more pits in the private sector than the nationalised industry considered possible in the public sector. Once again, privatisation has proved immensely successful, despite everything that the Labour party has said.

### Anti-competitive Practices

7. **Mr. Hain:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what action he intends to take tackling anti-competitive practices. [21948]

**Mr. Jonathan Evans:** The Government are committed to pursuing a vigorous competition policy under existing competition law, and to introducing legislation to reform the law on restrictive trade practices and abuse of market as soon as parliamentary time permits.

**Mr. Hain:** Is not the Government's competition policy in as much of a shambles as their party, so much so that the Director General of Fair Trading, Sir Bryan Carsberg, who is widely respected, is stepping down after only two years in office? The Government have not even been able to find a successor. Why does the Minister not adopt the Labour party's policy of merging the Office of Fair Trading and the Monopolies and Mergers Commission to create a dynamic new regulatory body that could stamp out anti-competitive practice?

**Mr. Evans:** One of the sights of new Labour with which it is somewhat difficult to come to terms is the image of the hon. Gentleman as a spokesman for competition in the marketplace. That unreconstructed Tribunite socialist is now portraying himself as a friend of competition.

I think that the hon. Gentleman referred to the speech made by the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), who suggested that he supported the remarks of the Director General of Fair Trading when he recently gave evidence to the Select Committee on Trade and Industry on the issue of a unitary competition policy. It is clear that the hon. Gentleman did not understand that evidence, because Sir Bryan Carsberg actually suggested that there should be a lesser role for Ministers and for the House. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East, however, made it clear in his speech that he wants to substitute his personal judgment for the independent analysis of the MMC.

**Mr. Anthony Coombs:** Last year, industrial output in this country was at its best ever level and manufacturing exports rose by 14 per cent., also to their best ever level. Does my hon. Friend not think that it is a bit rich that the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) should talk about anti-competitive measures when the measures that the business men of this country fear most are the imposition of a social chapter and the minimum wage—precisely the policies adumbrated by the Labour party?

**Mr. Evans:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. He will have noticed also that the hon. Member for Neath had difficulty understanding what he was talking about.

It is Government policy to keep the competition policy mechanism under review. For that reason, changes were introduced last year in the Deregulation and Contracting Out Act 1994 in order to refine the system. The Government have also announced that they will legislate further when parliamentary time permits. As my hon. Friend made clear, the greatest threat to competition within our economy comes from the policies advocated by the Labour party.

**Dr. John Cunningham:** Does the Under-Secretary of State agree that the Government's commitment to effective reform of competition policy can be gauged by the fact that the proposals to which he referred—which apparently have not been acted upon because of lack of parliamentary time—were first announced in 1988, seven years ago? Is it not clear that the Government's commitment is not to the competitive markets but to the privatisation of as many large-scale monopolies as possible in order to raise revenue to bail out their mismanagement of the economy? Is that not obvious from the Government's ill-considered, hastily arranged statement yesterday about the privatisation of the nuclear

industry? That is another cynical measure—a pre-election tax bribe—which will end up costing the taxpayers much more in the long term.

**Mr. Evans:** That effort was no better than that of the hon. Member for Neath. The right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) is correct in that we wished to legislate earlier in relation to the restrictive trade practices matter. However, I should correct his assertion that the announcement was made in 1988; it was 1989. It is only one part of a range of measures that the Government have announced. The abuse of market power consultation was undertaken in 1993 and a large number of the responses that we received supported the eventual outcome as proposed by the Government. The right hon. Gentleman has not referred to the fact that the Deregulation and Contracting Out Act 1994 confers new powers on the Director General of Fair Trading to accept undertakings. I know that the right hon. Gentleman welcomed those provisions previously.

### Machine Tools

8. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the top six countries exporting machine tools by value to the United Kingdom in the most recent complete year and in 1979. [21949]

**Mr. Page:** The top six countries exporting machine tools by value to the United Kingdom in 1997 were, in descending order, the Federal Republic of Germany, the United States of America, Switzerland, Italy, Japan and France. In 1994, the top six on the same basis were the USA, Japan, Germany, Switzerland, Italy and Belgium/Luxembourg.

**Mr. Banks:** I realise that the Minister is known for his foresight, but surely he does not know what the figures for 1997 will be. Nonetheless, it is a very interesting answer.

Is it not a fact that for many years we had a machine tools and transport machinery trade surplus, yet from 1983 we have had a deficit in all years except 1991? In 1994 there was a trade deficit of about £5 billion on machinery and transport. We do not export to many of the countries from which we import. Why do we have a balance of trade deficit with Japan? Why can we not export machine tools to Japan, which is our largest source of imports?

**Mr. Page:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for correcting my transposition of 1997 for 1979. I also congratulate him on giving me the opportunity to set the record straight. In 1979 there was a machine tools trade deficit of £50 million and, by contrast, in 1994 the industry ran a balance of trade surplus of £28 million. In 1993 and 1994 we saw the first balance of trade surpluses for two years. I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving me the opportunity to draw that success to the attention of the House.

**Sir Donald Thompson:** Is my hon. Friend aware that, in the real world of the west riding of Yorkshire, the machine tool industry is doing even better than it did last year, and will he join me in congratulating Denford Machine Tools in my constituency, which this very day is celebrating publicly the expansion of its business?

**Mr. Page:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The machine tool industry is showing significant improvement. In fact, on Sunday, subject to the business of the House, I hope to be allowed to fly to Milan to attend the EMO machine tool exhibition, which is one of the largest in the world and at which some 33 United Kingdom-based machine tool companies are exhibiting. I hope to do my bit to secure them some orders and bring more work and jobs to the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Hardy:** Would not that industry do even better if Britain had the same opportunity to export machine and hand tools to some of the countries on that list, and to two or three other significant exporters to Britain, that they have to export to us?

**Mr. Page:** The hon. Gentleman makes a valid point, but our machine tool industry has undergone a considerable revolution. We are starting to make computer-controlled machine tools that are suitable for export. Back in 1979, machine tools were manually operated and few were run by computer. That is the world in which we are operating.

### MK Electric and PMS

9. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to visit MK Electric and PMS to discuss the provision of new jobs. [21950]

**Mr. Eggar:** Neither my right hon. Friend nor I have any immediate plans to visit MK Electric or PMS, even though they are in Basildon.

**Mr. Amess:** Would my right hon. Friend join me—[Hon. Members: "Labour gain."] Is that old Labour or new Labour? Would my right hon. Friend join me in welcoming the news that the Princess Royal will visit Basildon on Tuesday to open the new headquarters of MK Electric, the company that produces the finest plugs in Europe, and PMS, the company that produces the finest gifts and novelties in the world? Does he agree that such expansion and investment are further evidence of this country's economic recovery?

**Mr. Eggar:** I am disturbed to note that my hon. Friend did not mention Basildon in his question. [Hon. Members: "He did."] I correct myself: he mentioned it only once.

I am delighted that Her Royal Highness will visit Basildon on Tuesday, not least because MK Electric, as my hon. Friend knows, has recently received an "Investors in People" award as well as transferring its headquarters to Basildon, and PMS is creating 170 new jobs. As my hon. Friend is aware, the number of people unemployed in Basildon has fallen by no fewer than 700 over the past 12 months, and that is recognition of the economic success in Basildon.

### Micro-businesses

10. **Ms Coffey:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the survival rate of micro-businesses in their first year of operation. [21951]

**Mr. Page:** To avoid placing undue burdens on small firms we use administrative sources to monitor survival rates of new businesses.

Recent estimates of the survival rates of new, mostly micro, businesses have been produced by Barclays bank. For the period 1989-1993, it estimates that on average 77 per cent. of start-ups were still trading after their first year of operation.

**Ms Coffey:** As the Minister is aware, the enterprise allowance scheme, which last year in Stockport enabled

350 people to set up their own businesses, has disappeared in a cloud of smoke into the single regeneration budget. There is no DTI funding for business links to give help and financial support to start up businesses. What advice, apart from do-it-yourself, can he give my constituents who will lose the benefit of the enterprise allowance scheme, and what proposals has he to help small businesses and people who prefer self-employment to benefit?

**Mr. Page:** As the hon. Lady said, the single regeneration budget provides some start-up support to help unemployed people into self-employment. She made the valid point that the first moments after any birth are the most fragile. There is a fond belief that running a small business is easier than running a large business, but that is not so. The important point is that survival rates for smaller businesses would be much better if those wishing to start them went along to business links and took strong advice on the viability of their financial package before going ahead. What is even more important for small businesses is a stable economic environment in which they can plan with certainty.

**Mr. Sykes:** One of the greatest challenges facing small businesses in 1995 is the over-burdensome and over-zealous enforcement of regulations by petty bureaucrats across the country. A year ago the House passed the Deregulation and Contracting Out Act 1994, at which time the Government promised to introduce a system of appeals to help small business people. What has happened to that procedure?

**Mr. Page:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right to refer to the fact that we introduced that Act. We shall consult on how better to advance that to help small businesses.

## Manufactured Goods

11. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what estimate he has made of when the United Kingdom will achieve a surplus in the balance of trade for manufactured goods. [21952]

**The Minister for Trade (Mr. Richard Needham):** My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will publish new forecasts for the balance of payments in June. Manufacturing exports were at record levels in 1994 and the prospects for this year are excellent.

**Mr. Grocott:** I do not blame the Minister for not answering the question, but will he confirm what the Under-Secretary failed to in his answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks)—that Central Statistical Office figures show that in 1979 in the key manufacturing sector of transport, equipment and machinery there was a surplus of £2 billion and that in 1984 there was a deficit of £5 billion? In the face of those incontrovertible facts, I suggest to him in a friendly and helpful way that the Government should abandon their policy of getting the message across, because in that key area their message has been one of 16 years of failure.

**Mr. Needham:** Every month the hon. Gentleman comes back for more; he often asks these questions. Let me give him the figures for cars. In 1979, exports of cars from the United Kingdom were worth £838 million and imports of cars into the United Kingdom were worth £2.6 billion—exports were a third of imports. In 1994, we exported £5 billion-worth and imported £9 billion-worth. We have more than halved the gap in one of the most important areas of manufacturing about which the hon. Gentleman asked. Between 1974 and 1978, the United Kingdom had 4.9 per cent. of world trade and between 1989 and 1993 we had 5.2 per cent. Will the hon. Gentleman please congratulate the Government on their magnificent achievements?

**Mr. Waller:** Imports of capital equipment have increased during the past year, which has reflected a welcome revival in the confidence of British manufacturing industry. Is it not especially pleasing that exports of the British capital equipment industry have done very well and that we are now in surplus with the rest of the world? Does not that demonstrate a favourable currency position and the fact that our exports are capable of competing effectively in terms of quality anywhere in the world?

**Mr. Needham:** My hon. Friend draws our attention to the capital goods sector, our share of which to non-OECD countries has increased from 5 per cent. two years ago to 7 per cent. last year. Wherever one looks, the success story of British manufacturing is there to be seen. Of course, we had to get over the 1960s and 1970s when we had to live with the results of Labour Governments, and it took some time to do so. Our good results are now coming through.

**Mr. Bell:** The Minister mentioned the 1960s and 1970s, but he might have also mentioned the 1980s. In that regard he might have read an interview with Sir Denys Henderson, the chairman of ICI in *The Times* on 17 April. He made it clear that in the 1980s his relationship with the Government had lapsed because, in his words, it was the Government's view that manufacturing industry did not matter. Is it not true that because of the policy pursued in the 1980s we had a deficit on our manufactured trade last year of £10.7 billion. The Minister does all that he can for exports, which we welcome, but he never tells the House that our imports have risen higher than our exports. As he mentioned the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his opening remarks, I remind him that the Government's only policy seems to be whether to raise interest rates, and even that depends on local election results.

**Mr. Needham:** The hon. Gentleman is a fair and reasonable opponent, although he always likes to reflect on the negative rather than the positive. He must accept that the legacy that was inherited in the 1980s meant that it took some time to set things right. Between 1974 and 1979, UK productivity rose by less than 1 per cent., in Germany it rose 4.5 per cent., in France it rose 5 per cent., in Italy it rose 5.5 per cent. and in Japan it rose 5.9 per cent. Between 1979 and 1993 our productivity has risen, on average, 4.1 per cent.—more than three times the amount that it rose under the last Labour Government. After Japan, we have had the highest increase in manufacturing productivity of any country in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. That is a magnificent achievement. The facts can be seen in the figures that I quoted on car exports. The hon. Gentleman should give some credit to the Government and to the people of this country for that.

## Ministerial Visits

12. **Sir Michael Neubert:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade on how many occasions since his appointment a car parking space has been provided for him when visiting static exhibitions in London in his official capacity. [21953]

**Mr. Heseltine:** It is not possible, without incurring disproportionate costs, to research my many visits to exhibitions in the past three years to see where a car parking space has been provided.

**Sir Michael Neubert:** Would my right hon. Friend accept that I do not begrudge him an official car parking space, which is one of the last great luxuries in life? Would he also accept that traffic is congested and parking is in short supply in Olympia and Earls Court in west London, where the main exhibition centres are currently situated, and that not the least argument in favour of the proposed new major international exhibition centre in the royal docks is that, in addition to ease of access, ample parking space would be available? As such a centre would not only assist in the regeneration of east London but enhance the potential of our capital city as a national asset, will my right hon. Friend do all in his power to support that proposal?

**Mr. Heseltine:** I thank my hon. Friend for his generosity in allowing me the privilege of a parking space. I can reassure him that I have just visited the potential site of the exhibition centre in the London Docklands development corporation area. It is for the scheme's promoters to propose appropriate financial arrangements and to secure the necessary planning undertakings. If they are successful, no one will be more pleased than me.

## Libya

13. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the value of the trade with Libya for any convenient years in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, at adjusted or current prices; and what is the value in the last financial year. [21954]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Technology (Mr. Ian Taylor):** In 1966, UK imports from Libya were worth £61 million while exports were worth £29 million. In 1974, imports were worth £386 million and exports £64 million. In 1984, imports were worth £165 million and exports £246 million. In the financial year ended March 1995, imports were worth £153 million and exports £185 million.

**Mr. Dalyell:** Is it not true that, partly because the present generation of decision makers in Libya were mostly educated at British universities and British technical colleges, not in the United States, British industry has been hit far harder than industry in America, let alone in Germany, Italy and Greece, which pay not a blind bit of notice to the sanctions? Will the Department ask two or three senior officials to look carefully at the film on Channel 4 which is to be screened for more than two hours tomorrow evening and which casts the gravest doubts on whether the Libyans were responsible for the Lockerbie crime? Are we not hurting British industry by looking at sanctions without a certain critical faculty?

**Mr. Taylor:** I know that the hon. Gentleman takes a deep and understandable interest in the Lockerbie tragedy, which has led to his asking many questions about Libya. Libya is, at best, a marginal market for us, so it is not possible to evaluate exactly the effect on British business of our observing the United Nations sanctions. However, our relations with Libya have been troubled over a period.

I cannot comment on the film "The Maltese Double Cross", which is due to be shown tomorrow evening on Channel 4. Its editorial content must be the responsibility of the producer, but I have heard comments by others and, indeed, I saw comment in *The Sunday Times*, which cast doubt on the authenticity of the argument advanced. We will have to watch and judge, but at the moment the Government are upholding the UN sanctions that were imposed in 1992.

## Insider Dealing

14. **Mr. Mudie:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the outcome of meetings with the Securities and Investments Board on insider dealing. [21955]

**Mr. Jonathan Evans:** My Department has regular contacts with the Securities and Investments Board plc on a wide range of subjects, including, but not limited to, insider dealing.

**Mr. Mudie:** In the nine years since the insider trading legislation was enacted, fewer than 10 people have been convicted. As that crime is widespread, why have so few people been convicted? When can the small, ordinary investor expect Government action and protection? Are the Government, having indulged in a spot of insider dealing themselves over the sale of National Power, too ashamed to legislate?

**Mr. Evans:** Perhaps the hon. Gentleman, if he has an ounce of generosity in him, will recognise that the Government introduced that legislation. A Conservative Government attempted to legislate in 1973, but the Bill was overtaken by the election in 1974. Between 1974 and 1979, no such legislation was enacted by the Labour Government. The legislation was introduced by the Conservative Government in 1985. It was recognised at that time that tackling insider dealing is difficult and complex for evidential reasons as much as for anything else.

**Mr. Mudie** *indicated assent.*

**Mr. Evans:** I note that the hon. Gentleman accepts that.

It was for that reason that the law was subsequently refined. The hon. Gentleman will know that, in 1993, further provisions were taken through the House by the Government, which became operable on 1 March 1994. The Government consider it appropriate that we should look at the way in which that legislation is working.

**Mr. Jenkin:** Does my hon. Friend agree that it would be a rather perverse way of judging the effectiveness of the criminal law if we based it on the number of criminal prosecutions? It would not be a very good advertisement for the criminal law if we said that the more murders there are, the more effective are our courts and criminal law. Does my hon. Friend agree also that a balance has to be struck between the flow of information between companies and the market and the restrictions that we place on that flow of information with insider dealing rules? Would it not be wrong for unrealistic share prices to be shown on screens in our dealing markets because the flow of information was too stifled?

**Mr. Evans:** My hon. Friend accurately describes some of the evidential difficulties in attempting to characterise certain behaviour as insider dealing. He shows that we must proceed in such cases on the basis of evidence of wrongdoing rather than party political prejudice.

**Dr. John Cunningham:** In view of the ease with which almost everyone under suspicion, including, most recently,

Lord Archer, avoids even being charged with insider dealing, will the Minister confirm that, at recent meetings, the Securities and Investments Board has pressed his Department to change the law? Is it not obvious that such changes could mean civil rather than criminal sanctions, thus making it easier to surcharge wrongdoers, and that his Department is the Department that is objecting to and blocking such changes? Apart from the obvious protection of the old pals act, will the Minister tell the House why that is?

**Mr. Evans:** I can deal with the right hon. Gentleman's question very shortly: he should not believe everything that he reads in the newspapers.

### Manufacturing Industry

15. **Sir David Knox:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he next expects to meet the President of the Confederation of British Industry to discuss manufacturing industry. [21956]

**Mr. Heseltine:** I and other DTI Ministers regularly meet the Confederation of British Industry to discuss a range of issues. The latest CBI survey confirms the strength of manufacturing industry. Export orders are growing faster than ever and export optimism is at its highest for a generation.

**Sir David Knox:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that reasonably stable exchange rates are particularly important if manufacturing exports are to continue to rise, as they have recently? Will he confirm that, whether or not we are in the exchange rate mechanism, it is a major objective for the Government to prevent fluctuations in the exchange rate, as upward and downward movements are particularly detrimental to the manufacturing sector?

**Mr. Heseltine:** I know that my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will have all those matters carefully in his mind. My hon. Friend will understand that the Government's determination to maintain strict control over the economy is at the forefront of our objectives.

**Mr. Sheerman:** Does not the President of the Board of Trade realise that when he meets the CBI he has no credibility at all if he pretends that in the past 16 years we have not lost market after market and home market after home market? Is not his credibility zero if he does not talk to the CBI about how we haul back on that long path to securing those markets for British manufacturers?

**Mr. Heseltine:** The hon. Gentleman makes an interesting point by suggesting that the problem existed 16 years ago. I agree. Precisely because the last Labour Government did so much to undermine the competitiveness of British industry, it has been a hard and painful process to turn it round. However, the latest CBI survey shows exactly how substantial our success has been. Inflation has been below 3 per cent. for the past 18 months—the first time that has happened since 1961. Exports are some 11 per cent. higher. Growth in the economy has been 3.9 per cent. over a year. Understandably, the CBI reflects those exciting figures in its forecasts of the state of optimism of British industry.

**Sir Michael Grylls:** Despite the huge improvements in British manufacturing industry in the past decade or so, will my right hon. Friend discuss with the financial institutions the gap that appears to exist in long-term finance for firms with a turnover of between £3 million and £50 million? In Britain, those medium-sized firms still find it difficult to get long-term secured loans—true secured loans, not overdrafts dressed up as loans—for expansion and developing new products. It would pay dividends if my right hon. Friend used his influence in that direction.

**Mr. Heseltine:** My hon. Friend takes a great interest in those matters. I am totally sympathetic to the point that he makes. I have frequent conversations with representatives of the financial institutions and the Bank of England on those important issues.

### Research and Development

16. **Mrs. Anne Campbell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will outline the measures he is undertaking to encourage business expenditure on research and development. [21957]

**Mr. Ian Taylor:** There are a substantial number of measures, ranging from grant schemes such as SMART and SPUR, to those which improve the market intelligence available to business, such as the UK R and D scoreboard and the technology foresight programme, in which the DTI has been heavily involved.

**Mrs. Campbell:** Does the Minister support the view of the Science and Technology Select Committee that the evidence in favour of tax incentives to encourage business expenditure on research and development is sufficiently strong to warrant a Government review? Can he confirm that one is being carried out?

**Mr. Taylor:** I can reassure the hon. Lady that we constantly keep under review the need to encourage research and development and innovation in the United Kingdom. The competitiveness White Paper, which is due to be launched in a few weeks' time, will demonstrate just how extensive our thinking on those matters has been. There are provisions for companies to write off revenue or current account against related profits. That is not often drawn to our attention, but it already exists in law.

**Sir Dudley Smith:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that research and development is extremely expensive? There is absolutely no guarantee of success, but it is absolutely vital to the future of Britain or of any country. In the circumstances, may I reiterate what the hon. Member for Cambridge (Mrs. Campbell) said? We need always to pay attention to the tax position as well as other measures. My hon. Friend's Department can do more than any other to encourage research and development.

**Mr. Taylor:** I understand exactly what my hon. Friend says about the importance of R and D and innovation for British business. It is one of the keys to our competitiveness. That is why the DTI is now actively engaged in benchmarking to help companies. It is why we have expert counsellors in the business links, which are growing up around the country, promotions and conferences to encourage business to understand the importance of research and development and discussions with the City to change its attitude to the relationship between dividend policy and long-term investment in research and development.

**Mr. Clapham:** As the Minister accepts that innovation is vital to the competitiveness of British industry, can he

explain why his Department cut support for it by £5.5 million while allocating £30 million to the renovation of No. 1 Victoria street?

**Mr. Taylor:** The hon. Gentleman, sadly, lowers the tone of a constructive discussion. Civil research and development in this country has been rising. The overall figures are affected by the decline in defence in R and D expenditure, but I assure him that the DTI is concentrating on assisting British industry to understand the importance of long-term R and D—particularly smaller companies. There will be further announcements in due course, when the competitiveness White Paper is published.

### Japanese Trade Barriers

17. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations have been made to the Government of Japan about the trade barriers against British goods; and if he will make a statement. [21958]

**Mr. Ian Taylor:** We take every opportunity to make representations both directly and through the European Commission where the interests of British firms are damaged by trade barriers. We have regular and frank discussions with the Japanese Government on such issues. My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade and my right hon. Friend the Minister for Trade both visited Japan this year and raised current trade problems.

**Mr. Dunn:** Does my hon. Friend agree that there is a general perception that exporters from the empire of Japan have easier access to our markets than do British exporters to the empire of Japan? Will my hon. Friend be ever determined to ensure ease of access to Japanese markets by our industrialists and that free trade actually is free trade?

**Mr. Taylor:** I can give my hon. Friend some good news. In the first quarter of this year, our exports to Japan were up 40 per cent. The changes that the Japanese Government are now making voluntarily and in response to the yen crisis are likely to lead to further opportunities for British business, which we enthusiastically support. Our relationship with Japan, which has further to go in some key sectors, is best resolved through the multilateral arrangements of the World Trade Organisation. We hope that, in an effort to build the WTO's credibility, all nations—including the United States—will take that into account. That is why we referred our problems with whisky supplies into Japan to the WTO, backed by the European Union in the last few days.

**Mr. Pike:** The Minister said that our net exports to Japan are up 40 per cent. What is the balance of manufactured trade between this country and Japan?

**Mr. Taylor:** We have a deficit in manufactured trade but the figure for overall visible trade is a good deal more positive and in credit. Our overall position is extremely important. In 1994, our exports to Japan totalled £2.9 billion and imports totalled £8.9 billion. Those are the full year figures, so I prefer to use those.

### Trade Marks

18. **Mr. French:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many applications have been (a) received and (b) processed by the Trade Marks Registry since October 1994. [21959]

**Mr. Ian Taylor:** In the period from 31 October 1994 to 31 March 1995, the Trade Marks Registry received 24,241 applications, of which 23,717 were processed by the formalities section. In the same period 19,344 cases were examined, 13,090 cases published and 10,973 cases registered.

**Mr. French:** Is my hon. Friend aware that the volume of applications is such that it typically takes about five months to produce an acceptance or rejection, notwithstanding the registry's hard-working and diligent staff? Does he agree that such delays produce an unnecessary commercial handicap? Will he introduce a maximum target time of no more than three months?

**Mr. Taylor:** My hon. Friend refers to a problem that has arisen because of the success of trade mark applications following enactment of the Trade Marks Act 1994. I hear what my hon. Friend says and we will look further into the matter. Improvements are being made and staff have adjusted to the high volume of applications, which shows how well the British economy is performing. Otherwise, there would not be the demand that we are experiencing.

### Trade Statistics

19. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his latest estimate of Britain's share of world trade (a) in visibles, (b) in invisibles and (c) in (a) and (b) combined. [21960]

**Mr. Needham:** In 1993, the latest year for which information is available, the United Kingdom had a 5 per cent. share of world visible exports, an 8 per cent. share of world invisible exports and a 6 per cent. share of visibles and invisibles combined.

**Mr. Thurnham:** Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, under the Government's policies, Britain is more than maintaining its share of world trade compared with the years of decline when we suffered under socialist anti-enterprise policies dictated by trade union barons?

**Mr. Needham:** The hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) said that we were losing market share after market share. In fact, that is not true. Our share of world trade has gone up from 4.9 per cent. under the last Labour Government to 5.2 per cent. now. For a nation of 1 per cent. of the world population to have 6 per cent. of the world's trade is no mean achievement.

**Mr. Purchase:** Although we have improved our exports and general share of world trade, we have not kept pace with the general increase in world trade, which, during the past 12 months, has averaged more than 8.5 per cent., a total which we have fallen somewhat below. Is it not true that we are suffering now from a lack of capacity in our exporting industries which, had it not been wasted during the 1980s, would have stood us in good stead now?

**Mr. Needham:** The hon. Gentleman knows that our share of world trade increased last year. Our share of exports in volume terms was 11 per cent. up against an increase of 8.5 per cent. Instead of being somewhat down, it was a hell of a lot up.

## Drugs (White Paper)

3.30 pm

**The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton):** With permission, Madam Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the Government's drugs strategy for England, set out in a White Paper presented jointly by myself, as chairman of the Ministerial Committee on Drugs, my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Health and for Education, and my hon. Friend the Paymaster General. Copies are available in the Vote Office.

The White Paper follows the Green Paper published last October, to which more than 400 organisations and individuals, including the Opposition parties and the all-party committee on drugs, have responded. A list of all those who submitted written responses has been placed in the Library.

The consultation showed wide general support for the main lines of what was proposed. The White Paper therefore follows it closely, while making a number of modifications reflecting particular points raised in the consultation.

There are two main themes. The first, alongside a continuing commitment to legal deterrents and firm enforcement of the law by the police and Customs and Excise—and a reaffirmation that we do not intend to legalise any currently controlled drug—is a new emphasis on education and prevention. We need to educate our young people about the dangers of drugs, and develop their skills to resist. We need to convey clear messages against drugs to parents and to everyone in the community. We also need to ensure that people who do misuse drugs can get help through information, advice and treatment. The other theme is to establish key priorities, with clear programmes of action and indicators of performance in progress towards achieving them.

The priorities we propose are three. They are interdependent and of equal importance. The first is to increase the safety of communities from drug-related crime. To that end, my right hon. and learned friend the Home Secretary has already included a specific reference to drug-related criminality in the five key policing objectives for 1995-96.

All police forces, where they have not already done so, will now establish their own comprehensive drugs strategies, to be developed by April 1996. Those will cover not only the targeting of drug dealing and related crimes, but also, importantly, the wider role of the police—for example, in working with schools and in the community.

My right hon. and learned Friend will shortly also issue guidance to probation services about their work with drug-using offenders, including the necessary links between drug misusers and treatment services. He has already set out, in the prison service drug strategy published on 26 April, his plans for tackling the problem of drugs in prisons, for which more than £4.5 million will be made available this year.

HM Customs and Excise will of course fully maintain its effort in stopping drugs entering the country, dismantling trafficking networks and organisations, and working closely with the police to enforce the law.

A second priority is to reduce the availability and acceptability of drugs to young people. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education is today issuing guidance on that front, based on the draft issued for consultation last November. Nearly £6 million is being made available this year to support teacher training and new drug prevention projects. The effectiveness of drug prevention work will be included in school inspections.

But the problem is not for schools alone. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has renewed and extended the Home Office drug prevention initiative, under which local teams work with communities to develop effective ways of preventing drug misuse. We will also be co-ordinating new publicity campaigns, using a variety of expertise—in the private and voluntary sectors as well as in Government—to make the messages credible and effective.

For those young people who do experiment with drugs, whatever the messages they receive, we need to ensure that appropriate treatment services are available as soon as they need help. Pending the findings of the current review of the effectiveness of drugs services, which includes early intervention services for young people, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health is providing an extra £1 million this year for the development of such services.

The third priority is to reduce health risks and other damage related to drug misuse, and in particular to ensure that individual drug misusers have access to cost-effective treatment. The findings of the task force conducting the effectiveness review to which I have just referred are expected early next year. In the light of them, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health will issue new guidance.

Her Department will also ask health authorities to review the arrangements for sharing the care of drug misusers between specialist providers—including voluntary organisations—and the normal providers of primary care such as GPs. Those efforts will be backed up by improved access to information about drug misuse and the local treatment services that are available. A free and confidential national telephone help line, operating 24 hours a day, has been operational since 1 April.

Important though it is to have a clear strategy and objectives at national level, with the various Departments working together, such a strategy will work only if it is carried through at local level in similar partnership between the many statutory and voluntary agencies involved. The White Paper therefore proposes the establishment of new drug action teams throughout England.

To the membership of those teams suggested in the Green Paper—senior representatives of the police, probation and prison services, health authorities and local authorities, including the education services—we are, in the light of consultation, adding social services, and encouraging the teams to co-opt representation from the voluntary sector, which often plays a very valuable role in delivering advice and treatment services.

Chief executives of health authorities are being asked to organise the teams, but on the basis that each team should decide for itself who should take the chair, according to what seems best locally. There will be similar flexibility over boundaries, as the boundaries of the various agencies concerned do not always coincide.

But all parts of the country must be covered, and health authorities will therefore be required to report to central Government on the boundaries that are proposed.

To reflect the fundamental importance of wider community involvement, each drug action team will have an advisory drug reference group with a wide-ranging membership of relevant interests. The Government will provide some £8.8 million over the next three years to establish and support the new local arrangements.

The implementation of these proposals will be overseen by the Ministerial Committee on Drugs, supported by the central drugs co-ordination unit that was established some 18 months ago.

I believe that the White Paper sets out a clear, practical and comprehensive strategy, based on partnerships both national and local, which can make a real difference. I commend it to the House.

**Mrs. Ann Taylor** (Dewsbury): Opposition Members welcome the right hon. Gentleman's statement. There is no doubt that the problems associated with drug misuse have reached new heights: nearly every community in Britain is affected, and every parent is worried about the impact of drug misuse on individuals and families. The effects of drug-related crime and a drug culture are undermining the potential of our young people, pervading every community and devastating some.

Will the Leader of the House confirm that, when research shows that nearly 50 per cent. of our 15 and 16-year-olds have been offered drugs, and two thirds of all thefts are drug-related, we are indeed facing a problem of record proportions that needs urgent action?

The Lord President is aware and has acknowledged that the Labour party has taken a positive approach to the Green Paper that preceded the report, and we are pleased that many of our points have been taken on board, especially about the need for a national strategy and co-ordinated action. I hope that he will confirm that today.

The Labour party is opposed to the legalisation of cannabis. Will the Lord President acknowledge that that is common ground between us: that, given the need to send a strong and clear anti-drugs message to young people, action to legalise cannabis would be wrong, and that the debate about that can serve only as a distraction from the real issue?

I regret, however, that the report does not deal with another problem that affects many young people: the consumption of cigarettes and tobacco products. It is time that the Government turned their mind to tobacco product advertising, which is not covered by the report.

Having generally welcomed the Lord President's approach, may I ask him several specific questions? First, how much of the £5.9 million, which will be available through the Department for Education's 1995-96 grants for education support and training budget to train teachers and support drug education projects, will be completely new money? Will he give an assurance that that funding, which works out at just £240 per school, will be sustained, so that we do not see a repeat of what happened a few years ago, when a new budget for drug education co-ordinators was announced, but was rapidly followed by cuts that reduced their number from 135 to 75?

Secondly, as the Office for Standards in Education is rightly to be given the task of inspecting the quality and effectiveness of schools' policy on drug education, what will be done to ensure that the 9,000 school inspectors are trained in that specific area? What is to happen to schools that have already been inspected and will not be reassessed for four years or more?

Thirdly, why are the localised drug action teams—something that again we welcome in principle—to be set up by the chief executives of district health authorities? Would it not have been more appropriate for local authorities to be the co-ordinators? While on this point, does the Lord President envisage just local authority officials having a role in those teams, or does he envisage a role for elected councillors? On the funding of the teams, is the £8.8 million over three years for the development fund new money, and who will determine the allocation of that specific budget?

Has the Lord President read the report published today by Judge Tumim about the initiatives needed to deal with drug dealing in prison, not least because, in some prisons, up to 80 per cent. of prisoners are drug users? In view of the concern expressed today, which has been repeated on other occasions, surely his specific recommendations should have urgent consideration.

May I ask the Lord President about the impact of cuts in the number of Customs and Excise officers, who do so much, including at times risking their lives, to stop drug trafficking? Surely such Government cuts conflict with the task of fighting drug abuse, as expressed in the document.

Co-ordination across Departments has long been called for by Labour Members. We are glad that, for once, the Government have listened, and that is why we welcome today's announcement.

**Mr. Newton:** First, I express my gratitude to the hon. Lady for the general tone of her earlier remarks, the welcome she gave for my statement and her acknowledgement of the importance of the problem. I am also grateful for the positive and constructive response, which I am happy to endorse, of the Labour party, and, indeed—I say this to the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith)—of the Liberal Democrat party, to the Green Paper.

Just as I believe that a great deal will depend on the partnership between the Departments represented and between the different agencies on the ground, I also believe that the whole process will work better if it is also a political partnership similar to that displayed in these exchanges. I especially welcome the firm declaration by the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) of her opposition to the legalisation of cannabis. I agree with the reasons that she gave for that.

I will not spend too much time on what the hon. Lady said about cigarettes and tobacco—she might also have included alcohol—as those are the subject of actions, programmes and targets that the Government have set under a different heading, the "Health of the Nation" strategy. It is not that those matters are not being tackled: they are being tackled in ways somewhat different from those set out in the White Paper.

The hon. Lady asked me about the GEST programme. The funding of programmes to train teachers in drug education and innovative projects is new money for those purposes. However, it was, of course, taken into account in planning for the whole of education expenditure during the negotiations last autumn, when we had already published the Green Paper and outlined the direction in which we wished to move.

*[Mr. Newton]*

The question of training for Ofsted inspectors is a matter for that body, which is independent. However, I have no doubt that it will take appropriate steps to ensure that any necessary training is given.

The reason we asked district health authorities, rather than anyone else, to take the lead in establishing the teams—although, as I said, not necessarily to chair them, as that will depend on local circumstances—is that, of all the bodies involved, they have a direct line of accountability to central Government. That in particular was a point to which we attached importance.

The hon. Lady asked about the involvement of local authorities on the drug action teams. It is certainly envisaged in the White Paper that that involvement would be at the level of director or assistant director in the various services involved, because the intention is that those bodies should take executive action. However, I hope that councillors in the authorities will be involved in informing the work of their officials on those bodies.

On the point about Judge Tumim's report, at this stage I can say only that it appears amply to justify and underline the need for the prisons drugs strategy that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary and the Prison Service set out only a few weeks ago.

On the point about Customs and Excise, I simply say that intelligence activity in this area is being supplemented by some 50 posts redeployed from other locations. I see no reason to believe that a more effective use of Customs and Excise resources, which was what the fundamental expenditure review was about, will in any way detract from or diminish the increasingly successful efforts of Customs and Excise in this area.

**Mr. Tim Rathbone** (Lewes): Will my right hon. Friend accept my welcome for his statement and, indeed, the welcome from both sides of the House—especially members of the all-party drug misuse group, which argued for a Government strategy on this subject for many years, in an awareness of the difficulty the Government have in accepting the need for a strategy on anything, most of all when it is interdepartmental?

Will my right hon. Friend also accept my thanks for his personal catalytic efforts, and for the way in which he and his colleagues have listened to the submissions made on the Green Paper, which was published last autumn? Will he extend to the central drugs co-ordination unit the thanks of the whole House for the job that it has done, while also accepting that we are worried, because the unit has been promised an extension only until the end of 1996, whereas the White Paper stretches into 1998? I hope that the unit will be given an extension until at least the end of the period covered by the White Paper.

The Lord President has touched on one or two—

**Madam Speaker:** Order. I must draw the attention of the hon. Gentleman to the fact that this is the time for hon. Members to ask questions following a statement, and the House has an important debate coming up. I hope that there will be brief questions and speedy answers. Otherwise, I shall not be able to call all the Members who wish to ask a question.

**Mr. Rathbone:** I was trying to suggest a way out of that dilemma, Madam Speaker, by expressing the hope that the Lord President will find time for a debate on the White Paper as soon as possible.

**Madam Speaker:** In that case, I may not have to call any other hon. Member.

**Mr. Newton:** First, I thank my hon. Friend for his generous remarks about the successful way in which the exercise has worked. Secondly, I warmly endorse what he said about the central drugs co-ordinating unit, led by Sue Street. It is only a small group, but it has done a fantastic amount of work with considerable success. It has support among those with whom it has spoken, and I well understand why my hon. Friend wishes to see the unit continue, and I shall bear that very much in mind.

So far as the question of a debate is concerned, my hon. Friend makes me put on my other hat and reply cautiously. I would be pleased if I, as Leader of the House, were able to find time for such a debate.

**Mr. A. J. Beith** (Berwick-upon-Tweed): We welcome the approach and direction of the White Paper, and the priority it gives to education and access to health services. Will the Leader of the House confirm that it does not provide resources for hard-pressed individual schools to make teaching time available for the vital work of drugs education?

Will he explain the philosophy which lay behind the Department of Education's guidance to schools that they need not report to the police cases of possession of cannabis among school pupils, or suspend pupils in those cases? To those of us who believe that it would not be appropriate to legalise cannabis, is that a recognition that there are some complicated problems associated with the matter?

Does the right hon. Gentleman recognise that, while he has been deliberating, the Chief Inspector of Prisons has castigated the Prison Service for failing to deal with the scale of the drugs problem in prisons? Will he recognise that the drug action teams will have to listen to young people, people who deal with addiction and people in the health services, who often take a rather different view of the matter from politicians and civil servants?

**Mr. Newton:** There appeared to be some ambivalence in the right hon. Gentleman's remarks about cannabis, just as there has been—to put it mildly—some ambivalence in his party's resolutions on cannabis. I will leave that subject to be explored on another occasion, rather than engage in acrimony today, against my natural nature.

As for the right hon. Gentleman's comments on the reporting of the discovery of illegal substances in schools, I understand from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education—the right hon. Gentleman will observe that she is not far from me—that what he has said is just plain wrong. If schools find illegal substances, it is expected that they will report that to the police.

On the right hon. Gentleman's other point, one hopes that not just the drugs action teams but everybody involved in the field will make sure that they maintain their contacts with young people, because it is only by fully understanding the nature of the problems and how people feel that we can have effective action to deal with those problems.

**Mr. John Greenway** (Ryedale): May I give a warm welcome to what my right hon. Friend has told the House, and particularly the initiative for local drug action teams? Will the teams be sufficiently flexible to build on the work that is being done in many rural communities to set up pavement projects which are related not just to drugs but to alcohol and solvent abuse, so that we avoid duplication and harness local support and funding, as well as the Government funding which my right hon. Friend has suggested this afternoon?

**Mr. Newton:** The answer is yes in every respect. The White Paper does not set out a rigid prescription of how the teams shall be set up, what areas they will cover and who should take the chair, because we are anxious that they maintain the flexibility to relate to local circumstances, and we do not want to suppress the very good activities which are taking place in many parts of the country.

Equally, my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary's recent extension of the drug prevention initiative teams has led them to be covering much wider areas than before in many cases—including, I am glad to say, a new one covering the whole county of Essex. That means that they take in rural areas, as well as the urban ones which have often been the focus of activity in the past.

**Mrs. Audrey Wise** (Preston): A constituent of mine persuaded her heroin-addicted daughter to seek treatment from our local drugs team. Despite the fact that the daughter has a baby that was then being breast-fed, the response was that there was a waiting time of four months before she could receive help or treatment.

To tell a drug addict that she must wait for four months is effectively to say, "Go away—we're not bothered." My inquiries elicited the fact that it was because of a shortage of resources. Will the measures announced by the Lord President today ensure that sufficient resources will be available in my area to prevent such dreadful things from happening?

**Mr. Newton:** Although I understand why the hon. Lady raised that point, she will realise that I cannot comment here and now about a particular case. If she sends me details, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health or I will look into it. If we thought that there was no room for improvement in services, whether treatment or other, I would not be standing here now, nor would the Department of Health be conducting an effectiveness review. We shall seek to do everything we can to overcome any problems we discover.

**Mr. Roger Gale** (Thanet, North): I welcome the White Paper, but may I concentrate my right hon. Friend's attention on public concern about drug-related crime committed to feed a drug habit? One of the key objectives in the White Paper is to ensure that

"the law is effectively enforced, especially against those involved in . . . supply and trafficking".

What measures will the ministerial committee take to tackle the criminality of the drug user who creates the market?

**Mr. Newton:** I have already said that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has included drug-related crime in his key police objectives for the forthcoming year, which would embrace efforts to deal with the problem that my hon. Friend mentioned. More than 1,000 police officers throughout the country are principally concerned with drugs work, including more than 300 concerned specifically with that work with regional crime squads. If we find that more effort is required as the strategy develops, I am sure that it will be put in.

**Mr. Tony Banks** (Newham, North-West): May I say with great respect to the Lord President that Ministers are still not sufficiently seized of the extent of the problem of drug abuse around the country? Some 60 to 70 per cent. of everyone in prison is there, at some point, because of a drug-related offence, and it is easier to get drugs inside prison than outside.

Young people usually get their first experience with drugs through introduction by another member of their family. In the east end of London, abuse of drugs, particularly crack cocaine, is rampant. Is the Minister prepared to come to the Newham drug awareness project to find out for himself just how extensive the problem is?

I know that this is unacceptable to those on both Front Benches but, unless this country is prepared seriously to consider the legalisation of certain categories of drugs—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."]—we shall never deal with the problem any better than the United States has.

**Mr. Newton:** The answer to the hon. Gentleman's last point has already been given by hon. Members on both Front Benches, and I shall not add to that. The answer to his question of whether I am prepared to visit the project in Newham is: yes, although I cannot give an exact time. Nor can I guarantee to give the same response if I have a stream of similar requests, although I shall do my best.

On the first point, I refer again to what my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has already set out in the prison drugs strategy, which recognises the problem to which the hon. Gentleman refers. A range of measures to tackle it involve additional resources, including the introduction of mandatory drugs testing.

**Mr. Peter Thurnham** (Bolton, North-East): I warmly welcome my right hon. Friend's statement, but will he give maximum priority to preventing 14 and 15-year-olds from becoming addicted to heroin and so leading a life of crime, as is happening in Bolton?

**Mr. Newton:** I certainly acknowledge that, if that is happening, as it may be in other places as well, it is a serious problem, which I want to see tackled in any possible way. I hope that the measures that I have set out this afternoon will help.

**Mr. Gordon McMaster** (Paisley, South): Does the Leader of the House recall that the Scottish Office published a consultation document at about the same time as he published his? Is it not therefore a disgrace that the White Paper does not apply to Scotland? Does he agree that it may prove futile to introduce more Customs and Excise controls in England but not in Scotland and Wales?

**Mr. Newton:** My right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Scottish Office, in another place will shortly set out further plans for the development of the strategy that he has already described, following the findings of a working party that he chaired in Scotland.

I do not think that it is ridiculous that there are distinct, although closely related, approaches in the four component parts of the United Kingdom. They do have

*[Mr. Newton]*

their differences, including, in Scotland, the fact that the organisation of social services and probation services, and the relationship between them, is different. It is sensible to take account of those differences, but it is also sensible to do what we are doing, which is to have a strategy in every part of the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Richard Tracey** (Surbiton): My right hon. Friend's statement will be well welcomed by parents throughout the country, and I think that they will also welcome the apparent cross-party support in the House. However, does he agree that, in my constituency, which has a Liberal Democrat-controlled council, there will be problems in local implementation in view of the fact that, at its most recent conference, the grass roots of the Liberal party voted to legalise cannabis?

**Mr. Newton:** I have already made some reference to that matter, and I do not want to become involved, even at the behest of my hon. Friend, in the internecine warfare in the Liberal party, but I am sure that all Members of the House—and I think that that would include those on the Liberal Democrat Bench—would, whatever their opinions on that matter, want all local authorities to co-operate to the full in implementing that strategy.

**Ms Diane Abbott** (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): Does the Leader of the House accept that communities such as Hackney are desperate for a real war against drugs, because of the crime, the gangs and the gun use increasingly associated with the drugs trade in the inner city?

Although his White Paper is fine as far as it goes, should not the Government pay more attention to choking off supply, considering the resources available to the customs and, on a wider front, looking to our relationship with those third-world countries that act as drug producers and drugs transshipment points?

A great deal can be done to give resources to some of those countries to increase the strength of their own customs and coastguard, and we need to ensure that, on the wider trade front, we are not pursuing trade policies that force agriculturists in South America and the Caribbean into drug production.

**Mr. Newton:** I agree with most of what the hon. Lady says. This country does have a good record as a major contributor, for example, to United Nations programmes in that regard and to collaborative international action to try to tackle that problem. On customs, and enforcement generally, I draw attention to the fact that about half of the £500 million that is spent each year in this country in that respect is spent on police and customs enforcement, including more than £100 million this year on customs enforcement, and that seizure values doubled from about £250 million in 1990 to well in excess of £500 million in 1994. A great deal of effort is being made.

**Mr. Nigel Forman** (Carshalton and Wallington): Is my right hon. Friend aware that he and his ministerial colleagues are to be congratulated on the serious and comprehensive way in which they have approached that difficult problem?

However, in the interests of taking quick, effective action to tackle what is probably the most serious social problem confronting advanced countries, especially among young people, will my right hon. Friend give a high priority to the existing efforts that are taking place, quite successfully, in my constituency and elsewhere, of voluntary organisations such as the youth awareness programme, which has already been tangentially mentioned, and the community drug help line in my constituency, which are doing sterling work very cost-effectively?

**Mr. Newton:** I can give my hon. Friend an unequivocal yes to that. As I said in my statement, one of the changes we have made since the publication of the Green Paper is to urge the co-option of representatives of the voluntary sector on to the drug action teams, and the drug reference groups, the advisory bodies, will certainly include representatives of groups such as those that my hon. Friend mentioned.

**Mr. Elfyn Llwyd** (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): It is extremely welcome that the Government are now encouraging police forces to target serious drug trafficking. May I ask the Leader of the House, however, how much new money will go into that, and how many new resources will be available to police forces to enable them to carry out that very important work?

**Mr. Newton:** The resources available to police forces were only recently set out by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary on a considerable scale, together with a range of measures designed to ensure that those resources are used to full effect. We would expect that, as the police develop the force-wide strategies to which I have referred, those efforts will become yet more effective.

**Mr. Phil Gallie** (Ayr): The report refers to the dangers of Temazepam, but it appears that no steps have been taken to subject its issue to more control. Would my right hon. Friend be prepared to comment on that?

**Mr. Newton:** My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Health are taking immediate steps to reduce the misuse of Temazepam. That will be done by imposing safe custody controls on manufacturers and wholesalers under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, and by immediately starting consultations, which is legally required in this case, on banning the prescription of gel-filled capsules by general practitioners under the General Medical Services Regulations 1992. In addition, we are carefully considering the recommendations of the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs to reschedule Temazepam under the 1971 Act. I hope that what I have said will encourage my hon. Friend.

**Mr. Barry Sheerman** (Huddersfield): The Leader of the House has chaired a committee that has presented a White Paper with some good things in it, but I warn him that one action upon which the Home Secretary and the Government are embarking could destroy all that good. People used to describe the prison system as the university of crime, but it is not just Stephen Tumim who recognises that today's prisons are centres for gangs, the drug culture and the dissemination of gang culture and of drugs. Should the Home Secretary introduce boot camps, they will be the worst way of spreading gangs and the drug culture. They will do more damage to this country's drugs policy than any other single act.

**Mr. Newton:** The hon. Gentleman will have noted that my right hon. and learned Friend is sitting next to me, and his whispered comments about the hon. Gentleman's remarks were not entirely complimentary. I will simply fall back on the very point that I have made two or three times—within the past three weeks, my right hon. and learned Friend has demonstrated his clear determination to adopt new measures on drug abuse in prisons, both to prevent it and to ensure proper treatment and rehabilitation for those who are already drug misusers.

**Mr. Michael Shersby** (Uxbridge): Is my right hon. Friend aware that his statement is particularly welcome, and that the cross-party support he has received is significant? Can he say any more about the wider role of the police, particularly their work with schools, which is such an important part of the operation to get the drug problem under control?

**Mr. Newton:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend. As I have said, part of developing police force strategies is related to their wider role, as described by my hon. Friend. I know from my conversations with Chief Constable Hellawell, of West Yorkshire, who is the chairman of the Association of Chief Police Officers committee on the subject, that the police are receptive to the need to do more on that part of their work. I am glad to say that work with schools is a marked feature of police work in Essex.

**Mr. George Mudie** (Leeds, East): I welcome the Lord President's decision on the legalisation of cannabis; to have acted otherwise would have sent the wrong signal at this stage in the war against drugs. As a strong supporter of the strategy, I ask the right hon. Gentleman to reconsider the membership of the drug action teams.

The decision not to appoint a local authority member to them instead of a senior local government officer is a tactical mistake. It is more representative of Government thinking in the 1980s rather than the new partnership that is supposed to exist in the 1990s. If the Lord President wants dynamic, co-ordinated local authority action, it is tactically wrong to appoint senior local government officers and to have no elected representation.

**Mr. Newton:** I cannot add to what I have already said, but, just as we looked carefully at the results of consultation on the Green Paper, so obviously, with an initiative of this kind, we will look at experience as it develops. If it reveals the need to modify the existing approach or to adopt a different approach, I, at any rate, and I am sure my right hon. Friends, will always be willing to consider that.

**Lady Olga Maitland** (Sutton and Cheam): May I give a warm welcome to the White Paper? What focus has my right hon. Friend given to solvent abuse, given that half a million children in this country experiment with solvents, of whom a proportion, sadly, go on to use soft drugs?

**Mr. Newton:** I have made it clear that, in some cases, the drug action teams may wish to embrace other aspects of substance misuse, including misuse of solvents. We do not wish to prevent or discourage that exercise. I hope that my hon. Friend was encouraged by the publication on 20 April of the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs report about solvent abuse. My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade is now taking action with regard to one very important recommendation, and is establishing an industry-led forum to consider ways in which producers can ensure that their products are less liable to be misused.

**Ms Ann Coffey** (Stockport): I am a little concerned about the resourcing of the drugs strategy. The Leader of the House has already said that no new money will be available for the police, although he is asking the police to do a considerable amount of work with the community, which will have an associated cost in police time. The Leader of the House mentioned that £8.8 million will be available in the next three years to support local action on drugs. That amounts to about £2.9 million per year, which does not seem very much.

We already have a drug action team in Stockport, but we do not have the resources to back it up. How will the money be allocated? Will there be bids for it as part of a "drug challenge"—an analogy of city challenge—or will the money be allocated according to need? If it is to be allocated by the latter method, I think that the Leader of the House will discover that the money is not sufficient to meet need in the community.

**Mr. Newton:** As far as resources in Scotland are concerned, the hon. Lady must obviously direct her questions to the Secretary of State. [HON. MEMBERS: "It is not Scotland."] I misheard the hon. Lady; she may disregard that comment.

As to resources for England, I have already said that the Government are spending more than £500 million in the drugs area each year. In today's statement, I announced a total additional resource of slightly more than £13 million—that is £5.9 million for education, £1 million for health and £4.6 million for prisons, which makes a total of £11.5 million.

To that sum is added just under £2 million from the £8.8 million that I announced over three years for the drug action teams. The £8.8 million is directed at establishing and supporting—particularly administratively—the drug action teams. They in turn will be concerned with many projects that relate to other flows of funding out of the £500 million to which I referred.

**Sir Ivan Lawrence** (Burton): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, as 60 per cent. of all crime is said to be drug-related, the measures that he has proposed today will reduce crime substantially, particularly among the young? Does he also agree that the need to restrain the importation of drugs makes it all the more necessary to maintain our border controls, whatever anyone else in Europe may demand of us?

**Mr. Newton:** I agree with my hon. and learned Friend. He will know that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has said clearly on many occasions that we stand firm on the question of border controls.

I hope that the measures that we have announced today will contribute to a reduction in drug-related crime. That is what they are intended to do, and I remind my hon. and learned Friend that the first of the equal priorities to which I referred was ensuring that communities are safe from drug-related crime.

**Mr. Mike O'Brien** (Warwickshire, North): Will the Leader of the House confirm that the amount of money that the Government are offering under the drugs strategy equates with the profit from perhaps one good drugs haul?

*[Mr. Mike O'Brien]*

How will the Warwickshire police implement that strategy when the size of its force has been cut by 50 police officers this year?

I agree that we need a clear policy in this area, and that we must monitor it closely. However, the Government have failed to implement Judge Tumim's recommendations concerning drug dealers and gangs in prison—in fact, he has criticised the Government on that issue in the last day or so. How can we be confident that the Government will implement this policy?

**Mr. Newton:** We are going over slightly old ground. I have already referred to the increase in general police resources that my right hon. and learned Friend announced at the time of the public expenditure round late last year. I will not try to add to those comments.

So far as Judge Tumim's report is concerned, I think that the hon. Member is straining a little. My right hon. and learned Friend has clearly acted in advance of Judge Tumim's report to tackle the problems to which it refers.

**Mr. Tony Lloyd** (Stretford): Will the Leader of the House recognise that if we are concerned about the link between drug use and crime, the very high price of highly addictive drugs such as heroin and crack cocaine are more important than the arguments about cannabis, unpalatable though that may be to hon. Members of both sides of the House?

In particular, the right hon. Gentleman should seriously consider those examples where the link between money and purchasing of drugs has been broken by prescribing drugs such as heroin, perfectly acceptably, under the national health service. Will he take that as an example of how to deal with heroin addicts in a way in which they are prepared to be dealt rather than through exhortations, which will not work?

**Mr. Newton:** I have referred several times to the review of the effectiveness of treatment services, which include a number of pilot projects that deal with, for example, methadone substitution. I do not think that any of us can be certain that we know all the answers in this field. The White Paper takes us forward. I hope that the effectiveness review will take us forward on that front as well.

## Public Interest Immunity Certificates

4.15 pm

**Mr. Max Madden** (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker, of which I gave you notice. I wonder whether I could ask you to reflect on the powers of Parliament in respect of the issuing by the Executive of public interest immunity certificates, the so-called gagging orders. As you know, Ministers issue such orders from time to time, and it is for judges to decide whether they are upheld in the courts.

Could you reflect and subsequently clarify in a ruling whether departmental Select Committees now have powers to ask any Minister who issues such a certificate to justify that action, and, in cases that involve national security, whether those rights extend to the Intelligence and Security Committee?

Finally, Madam Speaker, as the Scott inquiry, which would not have been established had not a judge refused to uphold a series of such gagging orders, will report shortly and is likely to comment on the use of such certificates, such a ruling from you would be much appreciated by all those who wish to defend the rights of Parliament in relation to the Executive.

**Madam Speaker:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving me notice of his point of order. I have had an opportunity to reflect on the matter about which he wrote to me. His concern relates to the powers of Select Committees of the House. I must advise him that such matters are not in the hands of the Speaker.

## STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c

*Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).*

PRISONS

That the Prison (Amendment) Rules 1995 (S.I., 1995, No. 983) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Bates.]*

*Question agreed to.*

## War Widows and Pensioners (Equal Treatment)

4.17 pm

**Mr. Simon Hughes** (Southwark and Bermondsey): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to end discrimination and to review the effect of differential treatment of war disablement and war widows' pensions; to bring forward the means for equal treatment; and for connected purposes.

Last Friday, Madam Speaker, you led this House in our commemoration in Westminster Hall of those who served the country in the last war. Over the weekend, many hon. Members will have attended the services, commemorations and events and the two-minutes silence to pay tribute to those who died or were bereaved.

Today, I seek leave, with very welcome support from both sides of the House, to introduce a Bill that seeks to deal with some of the remaining discrimination and unfairness that is suffered by those who were alive in the last war or who are the widows of those who served, and who now feel that they are being unfairly treated by the state.

In early-day motion 186, the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) draws attention to the concerns of that group of our community. That early-day motion has attracted over 240 signatures. I understand that nearly 50 other hon. Members, who do not normally sign early-day motions, have written to the Officers Pensions Society expressing their unequivocal support, and that there are getting on for 100 Government Members who support the proposals.

My Bill contains four matters that I hope that the Government will consider if the House allows the Bill to continue.

First, if somebody receives a war pension, where he lives will determine whether it is regarded or disregarded for the purpose of council tax and housing benefit. There is a statutory disregard of £10, and local authorities have the discretion to decide whether to disregard further. That does not apply in Scotland and Northern Ireland, where there is a full disregard for all war pensioners.

The only fair system that would ensure that people were not penalised by a decision made by their local authority that was dependent on entirely other factors would be a centrally regulated system. There should be total disregard for all war pensioners in relation to their council tax and housing benefit.

The bill for such a system would be small. My information is that not 60 per cent. but almost 90 per cent. of local authorities have already introduced some such system. The best calculation of additional public expenditure shows that it would require less than £2 million more to ensure that all our war veterans and war widows are treated equally.

Secondly, if someone has served in the war, receives a war pension and is injured, his war pension may disentitle him from legal aid when pursuing any action arising from his war injury. That matter has been pursued by the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), who has taken it up with the Lord Chancellor. It causes great unhappiness and discontent among people who gave their service, have been injured and are rightfully entitled to pursue their legal remedies. It seems the grossest injustice for them to be told that, because they have served and have been given by the state a reward for their service, they are unable to receive legal aid.

The third and fourth issues would require the Government to look at two subjects on which they have made no concessions, which arose during debates on the Pensions Bill in the other place and on Second Reading, and which the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) specifically mentioned. Other hon. Members and I welcome the concession by the Secretary of State for Social Security in relation to the new clause on second bereavement or divorce introduced in the other place. That leaves two categories of people who are still treated unfairly.

There are about 2,000 widows who, if they remarry, will lose their entitlements. Whether they become divorced again or bereaved or their marriage breaks down, they cannot claim what was intended to be a war service entitlement. The evidence of those who deal with the issue all the time—the War Widows Association and services associations—shows that probably only one in 100 widows have remarried. The widows would rather not remarry. Some of them cohabit—sometimes they are forced to do so—rather than lose financially as a result of remarriage.

The cost of introducing a system to deal with the problem would probably be very small, and could even benefit the Treasury. Such a system would be much fairer on those involved. In 1989, the then Secretary of State for Defence, the right hon. Member for Bridgwater (Mr. King), accepted that the pension entitlement had been paid for by such people, who had earned their rights. It is anomalous that, whereas all other pension schemes, including ones in this place, give people a right which they retain for as long as they are widows, the war widows pension scheme, unusually, excludes those with a war service background.

The last category of people who are unfairly treated are those who married subsequent to the war service of their husbands. If someone served in the war and married later, his widow cannot take the pension that he earned and nobody else has inherited.

Every one of the 14 comparable armed forces schemes makes a pension provision for widows of post-retirement marriages.

The widows of Members of Parliament who married those Members of Parliament after their retirement receive the pension that their former husbands earned as a result of their service, yet the widows of service men who die before the beginning of the next century will be eligible for only a fraction of the service widows' pension, and the widows of service men who died before 1978 currently receive no pension at all.

We gave, rightly and properly, fine words of tribute over the weekend. There are a small and diminishing group of people who now want us to live up to what we say about the importance of what they did by what we do. It is shameful that, 50 years later, we as a state are unwilling to pay that small price.

I hope that Ministers will concede those matters as a result of the Bill, in the context of other Bills, or, at the latest, in the Queen's Speech, the Budget and the social security statement in the autumn. There is overwhelming support for the proposal. This is a great injustice, and the

*[Mr. Simon Hughes]*

price we would require the state to pay to remedy it is minute compared with the service for which those people are entitled to their proper reward.

*Question put and agreed to.*

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Simon Hughes, Mr. James Molyneaux, Mr. Alfred Morris, Mrs. Margaret Ewing, Mr. Dafydd Wigley, Mr. Winston Churchill, Mr. David Alton, Mrs. Edwina Currie, Mr. Nicholas Winterton, Mr. Andrew Mackinlay and Mrs. Diana Maddock.

WAR WIDOWS AND PENSIONERS (EQUAL TREATMENT)

Mr. Simon Hughes accordingly presented a Bill to end discrimination and to review the effect of differential treatment of war disablement and war widows' pensions; to bring forward the means for equal treatment; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 14 July, and to be printed. [Bill 120.]

# Opposition Day

[11TH ALLOTTED DAY]

## National Health Service (London)

**Madam Speaker:** I must tell the House that I have selected the amendment standing in the name of the Prime Minister. I have had to limit Back-Bench Members' speeches to 10 minutes throughout the debate. I hope that Front-Bench Members will exercise some voluntary restraint in their remarks, as, my researches show that 30 Back-Bench Members seek to speak.

4.26 pm

**Mrs. Margaret Beckett** (Derby, South): I beg to move,

That this House notes the public's concern over the closure of accident and emergency facilities in London, the reduction in numbers of intensive care, general medical and surgical beds, and the now widely-challenged assumptions that underpin the Tomlinson Report; and calls on the Secretary of State for Health to halt the withdrawal of hospital services and to moderate the pace of change in the NHS across London with particular reference to St. Bartholomew's, Edgware, Guy's and Brook hospitals and to refrain from allowing any further bed losses or service withdrawals, until she has re-examined the case for change and reported her conclusions to this House.

The Secretary of State has called into question the need for a debate today on the future of London's health service, but two simple examples explain why we do not share her view. When she announced the closure of the accident and emergency department at Edgware general hospital, she said that many of its patients would be treated instead at other hospitals, of which one was Northwick Park. Within the week, a terminally ill cancer patient, Maggie Curtin, was left in pain for nine hours on a trolley in that hospital, in which, the day after, her husband found her dead in bed. The Secretary of State deems Northwick Park able to cope with the extra work load that will come its way when Edgware is closed, yet clearly it is already a hospital in which staff and resources are under intense pressure.

When Bart's accident and emergency department closed, we were told that patients would go elsewhere, particularly to the Homerton. Before that closure, it was pointed out that the Homerton itself had had to stop taking admissions on no fewer than 10 occasions in the period during which Bart's A and E department was at risk because it could not cope with the existing pressure. Nevertheless, the closure went ahead.

Yesterday, in both radio and newspaper interviews, the Secretary of State demanded to know why my colleagues were not praising the Homerton and the investment there. She continued to stress that theme all day long—long after she must have become aware that the accident and emergency unit at that hospital had been closed for 39 hours because it could not take any other admissions, and that a motor cyclist who had had an accident 200 yards from the hospital had to be sent elsewhere.

Nor are those isolated examples. At 10.15 this morning, London's emergency bed service told us that no fewer than 13 London hospitals are at present restricting admissions because of the pressure on their facilities, yet the Secretary of State says that there is no need for a debate in which we can allow hon. Members to explore the nature and the consequences of the Government's

decisions about London health care in greater depth than could ever be possible in the aftermath of a statement, when each Member is allowed only one question.

In the most recent debate on London's health, the Opposition called on the Secretary of State to reconsider the proposals initially put out for consultation in the light not only of the responses to that consultation, but of further evidence that was not available when the initial decisions were made. We drew attention to potentially dramatic changes that were still in the pipeline. For example, special health authority hospitals had been subject to the full operation of the internal market for only a month, so no one knew what the effect would be on those hospitals and the number of beds that they could sustain.

There is nothing to suggest that the Secretary of State has heeded either that further evidence or the outcome of the consultation. That is why our motion calls on her

"to halt the withdrawal of hospital services and to moderate the pace of change . . . and to refrain from allowing any further bed losses or service withdrawals, until she has re-examined the case for change and reported her conclusions to this House."

Those are the views of millions of Londoners who are not convinced by the Government's case and who are calling for those decisions to be genuinely reviewed and reassessed.

We all know that many hon. Members on both sides of the House are deeply uneasy about whether the Government are pursuing the right course. Not all of them have even suggested that they will abstain or vote against the Government tonight, but many of them would be secretly relieved if there were some way to halt the juggernaut that may be carrying them to destruction along with London's health service.

In the debate that we initiated in February before the Secretary of State's announcement, it was noteworthy how many Conservative Members, having ritually abused the Labour party, expressed considerable concern about what was happening in their constituencies. I hope that they are under no illusions about which part of their speeches the Secretary of State took into account. The right hon. Lady has given too much evidence that her ears and her mind are closed to the voices of those whose opinions she does not share.

In that debate, the Secretary of State said that she welcomed the chance to set out her policy for London and the rationale behind it. Frankly, I doubt that. If there is one outstanding characteristic of her tenure at the Department of Health, it is that she has never come to the House of her own volition to advance, explain or defend in debate the policies that she claims are without need of amendment.

As recently as the weekend, the right hon. Lady said that there would be no concessions on the proposals that she announced finally and reluctantly to the House a month ago; although faced with debate and potential defeat, she is now said to be willing to offer some amelioration to the proposals that she believed so recently to be beyond the possibility of improvement.

Therefore, Conservative Members can be in no doubt that any announcement of change today should be carefully scrutinised for its real impact—being designed to get the Secretary of State off the hook for a few hours while leaving their constituents firmly on the hook in the years ahead.

**Mr. Jerry Hayes** (Harlow): Will the right hon. Lady give way?

**Mrs. Beckett:** If the hon. Gentleman's intervention is very brief and does more than reaffirm his loyalty to the Government's health policy, of which I hope his constituents are in no doubt.

**Mr. Hayes:** As an hon. Member whose constituency has been through the trauma of the closure of two accident and emergency units in West Essex health authority, I know that the closures were deeply unpopular at the time. There were burning effigies in the streets. Harlow has been through that and we now have a £10 million accident and emergency unit that will serve the area well. With her hand on her heart, never mind the party politicking, does not the right hon. Lady accept that, despite all the medical evidence, a review of a review of a review will not help one single patient?

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes):** Order. I hope that other interventions will not be as long.

**Mrs. Beckett:** The hon. Gentleman has not done himself or his colleagues any service. Under the pressure of time, I shall be reluctant to give way again to an hon. Member who makes the same point that he made in the previous debate.

I do not know what the hon. Gentleman's point is. We are discussing today proposals for other constituencies and other hospitals without any suggestion that the impact of those changes will be addressed in the way in which he claims it was in his locality.

There have been long-standing assumptions about London—that it received a disproportionate amount of money for health care and had a disproportionate number of hospitals and beds, which created problems that had to be addressed. Far-reaching change has already occurred. The number of medical schools was formerly nine but is now five. No fewer than 83 London hospitals have closed since this Government came to power in 1979. The total number of NHS beds in London has halved—the number of acute beds has almost halved and the number of non-acute beds has more than halved. There is no dispute among the experts that more beds have been lost since the Tomlinson report.

There has been a slightly unseemly dispute between Professor Jarman and the Department over whether all the beds that Tomlinson recommended should go have gone. I say unseemly because, in the Department's determination to produce different figures, it has taken a different scope of closures and a different time scale. However, there seems little doubt from the most recent Library figures that almost 2,500 beds have gone from the figures on which Tomlinson made his recommendations.

Some people assume that those bed losses in London are a good thing because they are bound to advantage other parts of the United Kingdom. Those happy optimists overlook the fact that what is happening in London is happening elsewhere. The process of change is the same and often just as damaging, whether in cities or rural areas. Decisions are taken in private, with nominal consultation, if any. The end result in every part of Britain is that the pattern of care delivery is changing without local people being fully involved and feeling that they have a say.

*[Mrs. Beckett]*

Under the present Government, consultation is a word. At most, it is a formal process that the Government endure, usually without much grace. It is not a process during which the Government listen.

**Mr. Roger Gale** (Thanet, North): When I was elected in 1983, my local hospital had been neglected by successive Governments for many years, and had been starved of funds as a result of the disproportionate amount of money going to London. Today, my constituency has £24 million-worth of new hospital, which will treat my constituents on site instead of them having to travel to London. I commend the actions of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

**Mrs. Beckett:** I am not sure what the hon. Gentleman is saying. Is he saying that because there have been improvements in health care provision in his constituency, which we all welcome, health care in London should be destroyed? Is that what he is saying? That is the reality of what is beginning to happen under Government policies.

In our earlier debate, we sought to persuade the Secretary of State to heed not only the further evidence accumulated but response to the consultation process. Hon. Members on both sides of the House sought from the right hon. Lady measured consideration and a measured response. What happened? The conclusions of South Thames regional health authority reached the Department of Health on 16 March. Those of North Thames regional health authority were submitted as recently as 23 March.

The Secretary of State announced her decision on 4 April. That was in stark contrast to the right hon. Lady's response to the report of the clinical standards advisory group on urgent admissions to United Kingdom hospitals, which apparently did not recommend proposals to the Secretary of State's taste. She considered that report for 13 months before she even published it, whereas the closures were agreed after only seven to 10 days.

The right hon. Lady's own recommendations following those proposals seemed to be no more than a ringing endorsement of what was, in all its essentials, the answer of which she first thought. It is a wonder that she did not introduce her recommendations with the immortal words, "Here's one I prepared earlier."

**Mr. Alan Howarth** (Stratford-on-Avon): The right hon. Lady's call for a measured response is really a call for procrastination. She is one of the few Labour Members who have served in government. Has she forgotten that that involves making hard choices? Will she acknowledge that throughout this century, a series of reports have made the case for the reorganisation of London's hospital provision? Does she accept that there is widespread admiration for my right hon. Friend's courage in grasping this nettle?

**Mrs. Beckett:** Yes, I do remember what it is like to make hard choices, and I also well recall that the making of hard choices involves a great deal more than simply accepting proposals that are put before one. The making of hard choices involves exercising a political judgment and saying sometimes, to those who come forward with proposals, "Yes, there is an admirable case in logic for some of what you say, but it is not the right way to proceed." That is what politicians are paid for.

What the Secretary of State has announced are decisions that could irreversibly affect, among other things, the future of Bart's—an institution which, for almost 900 years, has served the people of London. That is not a reason for saving Bart's. If the people it served had all moved away, if people had ceased to travel in their tens of thousands into that area to work, if it had lacked investment to keep it up to date or had lost the teams of clinicians to make it great, no matter for how many hundreds of years it had existed, its future would be bound to come into question. But that is not the position.

I am not entirely sure that I know quite how to express what I am about to try to say to the Secretary of State. We all know—

**The Minister for Health (Mr. Gerald Malone):** Do not say it, then.

**Mrs. Beckett:** This is not a matter for flippancy, and I have not finished with the hon. Gentleman yet, either.

We all know that people's health is bound up with external factors. Poverty, housing conditions and, above all, stress and insecurity, play a large part in affecting their need for health care. Bart's serves some of the most deprived areas of London. The people who live in those communities already face high levels of stress and insecurity. The removal of an institution on which, for generation after generation, they have depended for health care is bound to add to that insecurity. The Secretary of State is not even listening.

The removal of that institution is bound to add to that insecurity. It is bound to have a deep effect on people's emotions in ways that probably neither I nor the Secretary of State—we have not shared that experience—can fully understand. I see no sign at all that the Secretary of State has weighed any of those matters in the balance.

According to the King's Fund, whose initial report promoted the most recent round of changes, what is now needed in London is a comprehensive and full reassessment of London's health needs and provision. I remind the hon. Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes), who seems to think that none of this needs to be reconsidered, that they are the people who started the most recent process and they now say that it needs a reassessment.

The Secretary of State still talks as if none of that is needed. Her case is that it is unnecessary because the Government are putting money into primary and community health services in London. But that is as if the investment, which we support, had already addressed and dealt with the continuing problems to which the King's Fund is drawing attention.

But in trying to assess the progress of that investment, the King's Fund said:

"there has been no systematic attempt so far to gather and evaluate the evidence of the impact of the government's initiatives in London. In fact, a detailed comprehensive description of the kind of projects which have been supported is not available."

In other words, neither what has been done nor the effect that those projects have had is yet known. Yet it is on the basis of those unknown projects, that unknown impact, that the decisions that we are discussing today are being made.

**Mr. Robert G. Hughes** (Harrow, West): Will the right hon. Lady give way?

**Mrs. Beckett:** I had better press on a little. If I have time later, I shall give way.

The information that is available is not reassuring. Although building up primary care means more than simply increasing the number of general practitioners, it would appear that the hard fact is that the number of GPs in London is falling and that there remain major difficulties in recruitment. For that reason, the Department has been working with the British Medical Association on a package of proposals to encourage recruitment in London. I understand that the Secretary of State has had those proposals for a year without doing anything about them.

Of the GPs who are working in London, a BMA survey showed that 65 per cent. disapproved of the Government's proposals as detrimental. They are calling—the people who are supposed to be delivering the primary health care development that the Secretary of State says will remove the need for these beds—for an increase in the number of hospital beds.

Waiting lists in London are higher than they were a year ago. Even the figures for the last quarter alone, announced by the Secretary of State today, do not show a reduction in the area that covers London. They show a total waiting list of more than 1 million in the south-east as a whole.

London is caught in a vicious spiral, facing the breakdown of an integrated service. Accident and emergency departments are being forced to absorb the pressure as best they can. Increased pressure on A and E departments means more emergency admissions; more emergency admissions mean the cancellation of an increased number of scheduled admissions; those whose admissions are cancelled end up in the A and E department in need of emergency admission—and so it goes on.

According to Casualty Watch, from the Greater London Association of Community Health Councils, in Enfield the A and E department has sometimes been so busy and so full that even people injured in road traffic accidents have had to be seen in the minor injuries department, which is neither staffed nor equipped to deal with such cases. In Newham, children wait for hours for operating theatres to become available. In Redbridge and Waltham Forest, waiting lists are probably the longest in the country. There were more than 10,000 people on the Redbridge waiting list in 1993; by January this year, the figure had risen to nearly 15,000—an increase of 46 per cent.

The London ambulance service faces severe difficulties in coping with a 10 per cent. increase in accident and emergency work. Consequently, every London citizen faced with a crisis that requires the ambulance service must deal with the fact that it can achieve only a 74 per cent. response rate within the prescribed standard.

**Mr. Iain Duncan Smith** (Chingford): Will the right hon. Lady give way?

**Mrs. Beckett:** If I am going to give way, I shall give way to the hon. Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes).

**Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** The right hon. Lady quoted some of the reports that have been produced. Many reports have been produced about the health service in London throughout the century. Given that all the scientific evidence and all the studies of accident and emergency services have concluded that the reorganisation announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State would produce a better service and save lives, why does the right hon. Lady lack the political courage to back what my right hon. Friend is doing?

**Mrs. Beckett:** I have no idea on what evidence the hon. Gentleman bases his assertion, but the evidence available to me suggests that he is simply wrong.

At the beginning of the debate, I referred to the closure this week of Homerton hospital. According to the London ambulance service, that is the second occasion on which the hospital has been closed to "blue calls" since the beginning of April. On five occasions during the past five months, different hospitals have advised the service that they are closed to "blue calls", including St. Helier hospital, which was closed for 38 hours in January.

Ministers know that those are not isolated problems, that they are occurring without a winter epidemic and that they are grave. Only today my office received information about two separate and disparate cases that highlight public concern. Yesterday Mrs. Edith Berry was taken to West Middlesex hospital. Her kidneys were not functioning properly, and Parkinson's disease was diagnosed. A bed was finally found for her at 1.30 this afternoon, 20 hours after she was taken to casualty.

To underline our contention that the problems are widespread and exist not only in London, Mrs. Helen Kime has sent me a copy of a letter that she sent to the Minister of State, whose constituency contains Winchester hospital. She writes:

"On Monday evening"—

that is, Monday of this week—

"at 7.00 pm . . . we took a friend with a badly broken arm to the casualty department at Winchester general hospital. He was admitted to the Taunton ward and put on the list for the operating theatre the next day.

As I write this letter at 11.00 on Wednesday May 10th, 40 hours after his admission, his arm has still not been set.

He was left without food or water. He was not washed.

If he was a dog, the hospital would be reported to the RSPCA."

**Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman** (Lancaster): What has that to do with London?

**Mrs. Beckett:** In a not so sotto voce intervention, the hon. Lady asks what that has to do with London. I have pointed out to the hon. Lady and people like her that those problems do not only exist in London, although we are focusing on London's problems today, and that London cannot be sacrificed because every other area in the country will benefit; every area is experiencing the same difficulties.

Against that background, what are the Secretary of State's proposals, particularly for London? She proposes to close world-famous hospitals, and to take even more beds out of use. Let us look at Guy's, because, apart from anything else, it illustrates the need to scrutinise all that the Secretary of State says today very carefully.

A few weeks ago, the Secretary of State said that Guy's accident and emergency department would not be closed for some years, that Philip Harris house would be used

"for most purposes for which it was intended"

and that Guy's would continue to

"provide a wide range of specialist and local hospital services."

I am sure that many of those who heard that announcement thought that it meant that Guy's would be saved as they now know it. Answers to parliamentary questions that I have tabled show, however, that in-patient beds at Guy's will be cut from 702 to 112.

*[Mrs. Beckett]*

The transfer of services to St. Thomas's will not apparently be possible without even more rebuild, expense and disruption to clinical services than was originally suggested. It will still leave empty eight floors of Guy's tower and all 11 floors of New Guy's house, both recently built and in clinical use. I understand that, even if all the developments required to replace at St. Thomas's facilities provided at Guy's were carried through, available space for clinical services would be less than existing space.

Estimates of the cost of that transfer are in excess of £200 million. Suggestions seem to be made that much of that money will come from private sources. Those who make that investment will no doubt expect a return, yet that investment is being made in large part to replace facilities that already exist. Despite what the Secretary of State said last month, it still appears that 18 state-of-the-art intensive care beds are among the facilities provided in Philip Harris house which will be lost. That is on top of the loss of up to 31 existing intensive care beds at Guy's, when everyone knows that there is intense pressure on such beds in London as a whole.

In many ways, that aspect of the proposals symbolises the Secretary of State's failure. When Philip Harris house is handed over, it will include 12 surgical and six medical intensive beds, which, according to contract, will have been equipped with all the most modern purpose-built facilities and equipment. Such beds are needed. Intensive care beds are under pressure everywhere in London, yet the Secretary of State intends to authorise the spending of millions of pounds of public money to rip out and destroy those facilities so that they can be replaced by something else. No matter what the blueprint is to which she is working, and no matter who the experts are who drew up the blueprint, however long ago it was, that makes absolutely no sense.

There is concern about the practical and financial impact of the proposals for Edgware hospital. The money allocated to build up Barnet hospital is, I understand, sufficient for the first third of redevelopment, but London Health Emergency estimates that the Barnet project needs to be at least two thirds completed before it will be practical even to consider going ahead with the proposals for Edgware. That is apart from the question of redeveloping and making changes in transport patterns in the region, to which Conservative Members have drawn attention.

My chief criticism of the Secretary of State is that a pattern runs through all the proposals and all the problems that the Government create. They anticipate the effect of the change that they have decided is desirable. They presume that what they expect will happen, and that the unexpected will either not arise or be insignificant. When the unexpected does happen, such as the increase in emergency admissions, they carry on regardless.

**Sir John Gorst** (Hendon, North): Surely the logic of the right hon. Lady's argument is not, as she has already stated, that there should be a pause or a review, but that the closures to which she has referred should be reversed completely and, in my view, for all time.

**Mrs. Beckett:** The hon. Gentleman will no doubt make his case and that of some of his hon. Friends, but unless the Secretary of State is made to realise the depth of concern about the whole range of her proposals, some irreversible changes will take place. It may or may not be in the area that affects the hon. Gentleman's constituency, or in the constituency of the right hon. Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke), who represents Bart's, but irreversible change will take place. We believe that no such change should take place without review.

**Mr. Duncan Smith:** Will the right hon. Lady give way?

**Mrs. Beckett:** I cannot. I am sorry. I would have given way to the hon. Gentleman, but time is not on my side.

The Government assumed that the new computer system for the London ambulance service would work as planned and they pushed ahead with its implementation. Across the country, day case surgery increases and, as a result of technical change, there is increased throughput of patients, but either no allowance or insufficient allowance is made for the knock-on effects, for the fact that facilities to resolve the problems of people receiving day case surgery are all too often inadequate or non-existent, and for the fact that speedier discharge of in-patients means far greater pressure on wards as everyone still in hospital is at the peak of their need for care and attention.

Beds in psychiatric hospitals have been taken out of use in huge numbers. Over-ambitious anticipation of reduced levels of need has meant that even though the number of beds in the private sector has increased, there is still well above 100 per cent. occupancy in all too many cases. Psychiatrists despair that the facilities required to help them cope with those with a mental disorder no longer exist on a level to meet the need. What is true in all those areas of policy is especially true in spades of the funding of primary care in London.

The Secretary of State's chief argument for the reduction in hospital beds is that the Government assume what almost nobody else now takes for granted—that investment in primary care will reduce the demand for hospital beds. In fact, there is a growing suspicion that by revealing unmet need, it will actually increase the demand.

What no one doubts is that the public have lost confidence in this Government's handling of the NHS—something for which the Secretary of State blames everybody but herself. The public have lost confidence in the Government's competence, their good faith and their ability to listen.

One of the Secretary of State's colleagues recently spoke of her family's history in terms that, for me, evoked the 1914 war rather than the more recent conflict. Her colleague spoke of her in family tradition marching towards the gunfire. I thought that analogy to be more than a little misconceived. If there is a parallel with the experience of that conflict, it is that the Secretary of State, far from being a brave subaltern or even one of the poor bloody infantry marching towards the guns, is the general, safely back at headquarters ploughing on with a doomed strategy and refusing to take any notice of the fact that there is any alternative.

The right hon. Lady claims to have a mailbag full of correspondence supporting her proposed changes to London's health service. However, when we tabled a parliamentary question asking what percentage that was of the total correspondence that she received on the

changes, I am afraid she told us that the figures were not available. It probably would not matter if they were, because I am beginning to think that the right hon. Lady's outstanding political characteristic is that she hears only what she wants to hear. Her ears are as closed to other voices as her mind is to other opinions.

I know that many hon. Members in the House today do not support the policies that the Secretary of State is advocating and that if there were a free vote, she would be defeated. Those who do not support her proposals must weigh seriously whether they should support her in the Lobby tonight. She will take no heed—and I suspect that the Government will take no heed—of measured words of caution or of anxieties, no matter how deep, how sincere or how seriously expressed.

If the House wishes to send a message that even the Secretary of State cannot misinterpret or misunderstand, that message must be clear. It must be bold. It must be defeat.

4.57 pm

**The Secretary of State for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley):** I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'noting that the problems of London's health service have been the subject of at least 20 reports in the last 80 years, all of which have come to broadly similar conclusions, believes that a better service for patients lies in implementing decisions and not a further review; commends the Government for its record in investing in modern hospitals, first class specialist centres and primary care and for its determination to take necessary decisions in the long term interest of the Capital's health service and the people of London; and calls on the Government to ensure that the decisions are now carefully carried forward taking due account of concerns that they should be properly paced so that patients continue to benefit from new and better services before old ones close.'.

This is a serious debate and a matter of great importance and consequence. It is a subject of, frequently, great conviction and of great emotion, not only for my hon. Friends but, I accept, for Opposition Members and for those whom we serve in constituencies throughout the land. I believe that our task is to achieve a health service worthy of our capital city for the next century.

"To argue merely for the status quo is a grave disservice to the future well being of the health service in London."

The right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) will recognise—or at least she should recognise—those words not as my words, but as those of her immediate predecessor.

Sadly, as the right hon. Lady's speech today has shown, the Labour party has gone downhill since then. What is remarkable about the so-called new party is how it has scuttled away from the sound consensus on the need for change in London's national health service. The right hon. Lady's moratorium is a cop-out. Dithering in Opposition shows why her party would be a disaster in Government. This debate is a cynical and opportunistic piece of parliamentary gamesmanship, and once again shows beyond doubt that Labour will always put party politics before the nation's interests.

**Sir John Gorst** *rose—*

**Hon. Members:** Give way. *[Interruption.]*

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. I wish to hear the Secretary of State. Does she wish to give way?

**Mrs. Bottomley:** In a minute.

Governments must rise above such tactics. Our task is to take the necessary decisions that the national interest demands. There are no instant answers or scratch-card solutions. It is not a question of a bit more money here or a review there. Those are smoke-screens thrown up by the Labour party to disguise the real questions at the heart of the debate.

Do we want London to continue to enjoy an outstanding national and international reputation for service, teaching and research, or are we to submit to a second-class service? Do we want Londoners to have the most modern and advanced hospitals, or is it more important to preserve every building and site even when they are outdated and ill suited to today's needs? Do we want to bring general practitioners and community health services up to the standards of the best, or is the current patchwork a price worth paying to maintain the hospitals status quo?

These issues have been debated endlessly:

"For 30 years, reports have been written and schemes put forward for improving medical care and teaching . . . Everyone who has studied the problems accepts that specialist services are duplicated, too few patients live near the sites in inner London and those in outer London are deprived. Everyone agrees that the first priority is to improve primary care and help GPs."

Those were not my words but those of Lord Annan, a distinguished former vice-chancellor of London university. Lord Annan speaks for many.

I pay tribute to the many doctors, nurses, scientists, academics, commentators, the independent specialty review members, the research team members and the patient groups who have prepared and argued the case for change. They believe that the time has come for the Government to stand firm in London's interests. They speak with a powerful and authoritative voice which we all must hear. They believe that we must build for the future, rather than remain fossilised in the past.

It is not just the distinguished academics and eminent doctors who have been calling for change. Those closest to patients know that the services in London are not good enough. We must address change to make sure that we have a capital health service for the people of tomorrow.

**Sir John Gorst:** I wish to refer to a point that my right hon. Friend made earlier in her speech, when she described the tabling of this debate as opportunism by the Opposition. May I inform her that I sought from the Leader of the House an opportunity for such a debate and remind her that I wish to register my vote against these proposals?

**Mrs. Bottomley:** I accept my hon. Friend's constituency interest, and I shall say more about the situation in Edgware and Barnet later in my speech.

The Labour party knows full well that, if it ever pretends to be a party of government, addressing change in London is necessary. Many Labour Members are seeing phenomenal and unprecedented investments in their constituencies as we build hospitals near to where people live. For them, today's debate is a piece of outright cynicism and opportunism. I repeat those words strongly.

**Mrs. Beckett:** Will the Secretary of State give way?

**Mrs. Bottomley:** No, wait. *[Interruption.]*

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. The House knows full well that is up to a Minister or any Member who has the Floor to decide whether to give way or not.

**Mrs. Bottomley** *rose—*

**Mr. Andrew Faulds** (Warley, East): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Whatever gibberish the Secretary of State wishes to propound today, should she not be called to order? Is there not a long-established tradition in the House—I have been in the House longer than the Secretary of State—that when the leading speaker from the Opposition gets up, the Secretary of State sits down?

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. The hon. Gentleman may have been here for a long time, but he has still not grasped the point.

**Mrs. Bottomley:** I shall give way to the right hon. Member for Derby, South in a moment, but I want to get on a little further in my speech first.

There are difficulties and problems, and it is well understood that hon. Members feel close to their constituents and the institutions which have served them over many years. It is inevitable that when we are faced with such complex and fundamental change, great sensitivity is necessary in handling the delivery of that change. But the difficulties and the problems make the case for change even stronger.

The stories and accounts that we have heard of the difficulties in hospitals are precisely because there are many separate units instead of larger units, which are better managed and which co-operate better in handling the ebbs and flows of health care more effectively. Report after report makes the point that we must deliver a health service which is right for the future, and not a service that was right for the past.

**Mrs. Beckett:** The Secretary of State has repeated today what she has said repeatedly in the past few days on radio and television. She has said that there is something cynical and opportunistic about the Opposition tabling the debate. As her hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, North (Sir. J. Gorst) reminded her, we called on the Secretary of State to provide a debate during which the House could thoroughly assess and thrash out the consequences of the proposals. We have called on her to do that many times in the past, and it is a demand that she has consistently refused.

If the Secretary of State thinks that it is not the purpose of Members of this House or members of Her Majesty's Opposition to provide an opportunity for proposals of this magnitude to be assessed, debated and discussed by people of different points of view, she does not belong in the House at all. That is what we are here for.

**Mrs. Bottomley:** I totally accept that the Labour party is the natural party of opposition. It constantly criticises and interprets developments in a cynical fashion, but never has any constructive proposals. Those of us who are now seeing the third health spokesman for the Labour party are still waiting for a policy from any of them. "A moratorium", "out to consultation" and "another review" is what we hear. The Labour party does not want to offend anybody, and it never says yes or no. That is always the way forward for the Labour party.

The right hon. Member for Derby, South responded to an intervention from my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, North in that way—she said neither yes or no. The Labour party will say anything to try to achieve power ruthlessly and cynically.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Mrs. Bottomley:** I intend to proceed.

**Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman:** Will my right hon. Friend give way?

**Mrs. Bottomley:** In a moment.

The change must be handled sensitively and it must be properly paced, but there is no serious challenge to the direction of travel. "Go carefully," we are told, "but do not go back".

I give my hon. Friends, Members of the House and London patients a strong assurance that there can be no going back. The issue now is not the policy, but the implementation of the policy.

It is the duty of the health service to carry out the decisions with skill, tact and perseverance if the benefits to London and the rest of the country are to come through. I have just written to the chairmen of the two Thames regions to stress precisely that message. Those chairmen, and the health authority and trust chairmen involved, will be held to account for carrying the policies through. They must explain, listen, lead and reassure staff and public alike that the changes will bring tangible and important benefits to patients. That is a message that they welcome. They are committed to working for the future, and not clinging to the past.

**Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman:** My right hon. Friend will have noticed that the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) said that if there were a free vote tonight we would not vote in support of the proposals. Should not the right hon. Lady give a free vote to Opposition Members to see how her northern Labour Members vote? They do not want more money for London, but more money for the provinces.

**Mrs. Bottomley:** As ever, my hon. Friend is acute on matters of health policy.

**Sir Teddy Taylor** (Southend, East): While I fully understand the views of local Members of Parliament, will the Secretary of State confirm that the over-concentration of hospitals and spending in central London inevitably mean that other areas in the region are seriously and consistently under-funded? Would it comfort the Secretary of State to know that many of us have a great deal of admiration for her courage in facing up to an issue that has been neglected for years, but only contempt for the Opposition, who pretend that the problem does not exist?

**Mrs. Bottomley:** I thank my hon. Friend. He represents a constituency where, in the past, constituents routinely travelled to London for care that they now receive at home. It is time to have a better balance of service and funding. London has long had many specialty hospitals, which are duplicated and fragmented and do not deliver the care that we expect for the future. We seek to achieve a balance within London and the home counties.

The result of the changes will be more modern local hospitals that are better geared to meeting the needs of Londoners today and tomorrow. For example, in Greenwich a new hospital—the Queen Elizabeth—will be available to NHS patients from August, bringing services from two other hospitals on to a better site. Neuro-sciences will transfer from the Brook to King's. Close links with the internationally respected Institute of Psychiatry will establish a truly world-class centre of excellence.

Hon. Members will know how strongly I believe that our job is to maintain not only national but international excellence in this country's research and teaching. The Brook hospital will close as it is old, cramped and ill-suited to modern health care. Incidentally, it has no "e" on the end, as the Opposition wrote in their original motion.

**Mr. Harry Greenway** (Ealing, North): My right hon. Friend will know of my concerns for the national health service in London, which I have frequently discussed with her. The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) and I have often raised the issue of the London ambulance service. Is she aware that this morning I called an ambulance for a lady who collapsed before my eyes? It arrived within seven minutes and the lady was in hospital and being properly treated shortly afterwards. Will that be the future pattern for London?

Is my right hon. Friend also aware that, just a few years ago, Labour-controlled Ealing council put £500,000 on the rates of Ealing hospital and other medical or hospital institutions in Ealing, so much did they care about the health service for my constituents—

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. I have already said that interventions must be brief.

**Mrs. Bottomley:** My hon. Friend is right about the significant developments in the London ambulance service, which for many years has been a troubled and unsatisfactory service. We now see extremely encouraging progress: better manning and staffing arrangements, clearer leadership and, above all, a better service for the people of London, including my hon. Friend's constituents.

**Ms Glenda Jackson** (Hampstead and Highgate): The Secretary of State will know that last year one of my constituents suffered third-degree burns to 40 per cent. of his body on a Sunday. He had to be taken to hospital in a fire engine because no ambulance was available in north-west London. When I drew that case to the attention of the Secretary of State, the letter that I received in reply led me to believe that new ambulances would be provided for that part of London. A subsequent letter has told me that the proposal to cut the ambulance service within my constituency from its present complement of eight ambulances to two is a step forward. I do not regard that as an advance and nor do my constituents.

**Mrs. Bottomley:** I shall look into the hon. Lady's case. I can inform her, however, that 180 new vehicles are being provided for the London ambulance service and there is a formidable programme of investment. We have long sought better management and leadership of the London ambulance service, which is one of the few services left that has not gained trust status. It is old-style NHS, not the NHS that we have been so keen to put in place.

As well as the changes that I have described, many other hospitals are being strengthened and improved. I challenge the Opposition to admit that their constituents often see the benefits. The hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms Jackson) is all too keen to criticise, but we rarely hear about the improvements taking place at the Royal Free hospital or the extra investment. The hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) never mentions the £2 million spent on his accident and emergency service.

**Mr. Jeremy Corbyn** (Islington, North): Will the Secretary of State explain why there was no elective surgery in the Whittington hospital between December and April this year? Why are 3,000 people waiting for operational appointments at the Whittington hospital when she has managed to spend so much money on improving health care in Islington by closing Bart's and the Royal Northern hospitals?

**Mrs. Bottomley:** Time and again, the Opposition fail to appreciate why it is so necessary to introduce change in London. Waiting times are coming down, but we need larger and better balanced units, A and E services which deliver a high quality of care, and investment in primary care. That is exactly what we are delivering.

Although we hear from the hon. Member for Dulwich (Ms Jowell) about Guy's, she never mentions what is happening at King's—the new neuro-sciences unit, liver unit and magnificent day surgery unit, and the £8 million going into the A and E services. Nor do we hear from the Opposition that by tackling the problems in London we can better help hospitals outside London, which so many of my hon. Friends are concerned about.

**Sir George Gardiner** (Reigate): Before my right hon. Friend leaves the subject of constituency interests and loyalties, is she aware of the great irritation felt by many patients outside London at the assumption that any serious case must be treated at a London hospital? She will be aware of all the new regional specialist centres that have been founded in recent years. Will she undertake not to seek to pacify pressure groups from London at the expense of funding for the new centres of excellence throughout the country?

**Mrs. Bottomley:** My hon. Friend is exactly right. What we need is a national health service which serves patients' interests but does not have its agenda dictated by the patterns of the past.

I wonder whether the hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Mr. Jamieson) will speak on behalf of his constituents. Does he still want them to travel 200 miles from Plymouth to the London Chest hospital for their heart operations, or will he have the courage to admit that the changes in London will deliver a new cardiac unit in Plymouth?

The person who deserves a prize for the ultimate cynicism is the right hon. Member for Derby, South. Did we hear a word from her about the £10 million for the Derbyshire Royal infirmary? Of course not. It is the height of hypocrisy for the right hon. Lady to criticise changes in London when similar concentrations of

*[Mrs. Bottomley]*

specialist services are taking place in her constituency along with the development of community services, and her constituents are seeing the benefits.

**Mr. Hugh Dykes** (Harrow, East): My right hon. Friend is right to say that Conservative Members do not need advice from the Labour party. When it was last in government, some 60 hospitals a year were wholly or significantly closed down. Does my right hon. Friend appreciate the difference in the complex arguments between central and outer London hospitals and the severe crisis that Edgware General hospital in outer London faces? If its A and E unit is closed down, Barnet General hospital and Northwick Park hospital will be too far away for ambulances to get there in time. Her suggestion of two additional ambulances is insufficient and inadequate. Will she respond to those arguments for Edgware General hospital?

**Mrs. Bottomley:** My hon. Friend will understand that I have already said that I hope to say more about Edgware General hospital later. I shall refer specifically to the matters that he has mentioned, but he is absolutely right about the Labour party.

The right hon. Member for Derby, South may be an endangered species, as one of the few members of her party to have served in government, but she appears to have forgotten that Government's record, in which I am not surprised that she takes little pride. Sixty hospitals closed in every year that Labour were in office. They cut nurses' pay and cut—

**Mrs. Beckett:** The Secretary of State has now said two things in an attack on me. The first I find extraordinary. She says that I do not welcome investment in my constituency; of course I do. But why—*[Interruption.]* I simply add that, when the Derbyshire Royal infirmary, to which she referred, was contacted, it asked where the £10 million was, but we shall not go into that.

I do not know why the Secretary of State should suppose that, because there has been investment in hospitals in my constituency, I should be indifferent to the problems that she is causing in London. That is a peculiar attitude to express.

Secondly, it is untrue that 60 hospitals a year closed under the most recent Labour Government. The figures show that 128 hospitals were built in five years under the most recent Labour Government, compared with 21 under the present Government.

**Mrs. Bottomley:** We can clarify the figures further at a later time. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] Sixty hospitals closed—*[Interruption.]* The hospital closure programme of the most recent Labour Government is the least of their record. What about a party that cut nurses' pay, cut doctors' pay and cut national health service spending for the only time in its history? That is what the right hon. Lady—

**Mrs. Beckett:** Will the Secretary of State give way?

**Mrs. Bottomley:** No, I have given way quite enough. [HON. MEMBERS: "Give way."] No, I will not.

That is what the right hon. Lady described a moment ago as exercising political judgment. Those of us who worked in the health service at that time remember what that political judgment was like: it was painful for staff and patients, and none of us wish it to be repeated.

**Mr. Nigel Spearing** (Newham, South): It is being repeated.

**Mrs. Bottomley:** That is interesting. The hon. Gentleman said that it is being repeated, but it was a strange use of language because there has been an enormous advance in nurses' and doctors' pay, there has been an improvement in training and, most important, we have opened—not closed, but opened—a new hospital development, on average, every week that we have been in government.

**Mr. Jacques Arnold** (Gravesham): Would my right hon. Friend note that we in north-west Kent, which goes for many of the home counties, resent the fact that so many of our constituents have to travel at great inconvenience all the way into central London for treatment, where added on-costs of 40 per cent. apply? That is because resources have always been concentrated on central London. If my right hon. Friend presses on and releases resources to improve the type of centres to which my hon. Friend the Member for Reigate (Sir G. Gardiner) referred, and Darenth Park hospital in my constituency, she will have support for putting health care where people actually live.

**Mrs. Bottomley:** I share my hon. Friend's opinions, but it is important that the specialty services which remain in London—the tertiary services—should become even greater centres of excellence.

The dilemma is that, as fewer patients come to London, for all the understandable reasons, because of the massive building programme that we have established throughout the home counties, when they do come to London they will expect a level of care and a quality of expertise that is among the absolute best. Only by bringing those specialty services together shall we achieve that excellence. That is what the specialty review said. That is what the academics and the researchers said time and again. That is the reason why we have received such strong support for those proposals from the leaders of the profession, especially those who mind about excellence, not only for the present century, but for the century ahead.

**Mr. Simon Hughes** (Southwark and Bermondsey): Will the Secretary of State give way?

**Mrs. Bottomley:** I will not.

Before I leave the subject of the record of the right hon. Member for Derby, South, it is irresistible for me to remind the House about the cuts over which we have indeed presided—the cuts in waiting times. Five years ago, before our reforms, there were 200,000 one-year waiters in the country. It is interesting that the Labour party sneers when it talks about waiting times because, if one asks people what they think about the national health service, time and again they say that they cannot fault the care that they had, but that they waited too long. We have consistently made waiting time a priority. Yesterday we announced that, instead of 200,000 one-year waiters, we now have fewer than 32,000. That is a splendid and remarkable achievement.

**Mr. Patrick McLoughlin** (West Derbyshire): When my right hon. Friend talks about the record of the national health service, for which she is responsible, in Derbyshire, will she acknowledge that not only have new buildings been built at the Derbyshire Royal infirmary but a new children's hospital will soon open in the Derby City General hospital and a brand new hospital has been built in Chesterfield? That is our commitment to the health service and the capital programme, which was cut by the Labour party in Government.

**Mrs. Bottomley:** Once again, my hon. Friend exactly identifies the issue. The Labour party appears to argue that one can have all the new hospitals, the new developments, the centres, the equipment, the expert staff, without ever closing an old hospital, without ever taking a difficult decision, ducking every difficult problem, pandering to every pressure group. The new Labour party makes Michael Foot's old outfit look like international statesmen.

If we ducked the decisions, the Opposition would have a legitimate cause for grievance, but they know that it is not so, because we are tackling the issues that matter. I have talked about improved hospital services closer to where people live. Improved primary care in London also matters. It matters that the poor, the sick, the homeless and the mentally ill can rely on effective local services to meet their needs.

When the right hon. Member for Derby, South was a Labour party researcher, I was researching in the east end, in Bethnal Green. I know how people in Bethnal Green were deprived of even a moderate level of primary care, of general practice, of the basics of a health service. Yes, there were any number of institutions, but the basics, which must be the essential foundation of a health service, were lacking. I do not take it kindly when the right hon. Lady suggests that I do not know the realities of life in the inner cities, having spent more of my life working in the most impoverished districts in the inner cities than I have in politics, let alone in government.

**Mr. Simon Hughes:** Will the Secretary of State give way?

**Mrs. Bottomley:** I shall come to the hon. Gentleman in a moment, when I discuss his area.

Time and again, the Labour party used to urge us to invest in primary care. It does not make that charge so much any more, because we have exceeded the commitments that we promised at the beginning of the process. The King's Fund and Tomlinson recommend investment in primary care. Tomlinson recommended £140 million for primary care. We have invested £210 million in 1,000 or more schemes throughout London—new general practitioner services, modern health centres, community health teams, hospitals at home. That is a great range of provision. When did the Labour party ever do as much for the people of London? When did it ever do anything for the people of London?

What matters is decent community care. It matters that elderly infirm people are well looked after at home or in homely surroundings. Since the publication of the Tomlinson report, we have committed an extra £338 million to London local authorities for social services. The first fruits of that investment are becoming apparent. An extra 200 nursing beds opened in inner London in the past year, another 800 were approved and there are plans for at least 1,000 more. Those are the necessary services to meet the needs of an aging population.

It matters that patients who need emergency care receive it from a well equipped centre, staffed by highly trained doctors and nurses, with all the back-up that they need—not from old, isolated units where care might become a lottery and lives might be put at risk.

"A small number of larger clinical teams gives the patient the best chance, each team supported by a greater number of intensive care and specialist beds"—

not my words, but those of a doctor who works in one of the busiest accident and emergency departments in the capital, Dr. Howard Baderman, who also advises the chief medical officer on A and E services.

The clinical advice is clear and consistent. No responsible Government could construct a health service disregarding the advice about the way to have the best clinical outcomes from A and E services—the basic and fundamental element in our health service.

When the Labour party cannot attack the argument, it plays on the fears of the vulnerable and the sick and spreads scares, but the public have seen through that. They remember Jennifer's ear: that lost Labour the last general election, and it will lose it the next.

What matters is harnessing new technology to treat more patients to an ever higher standard. Many more patients can be treated without staying overnight in hospital or by their GPs. The new specialist centres outside London, to which my hon. Friends have already referred, mean that patients can be treated locally rather than in London. Health authorities have a duty to plan the level and range of services that their areas need, which must, of course, have an adequate and appropriate supply of beds.

The Government do not have a target for bed numbers. We expect health authorities to balance services to needs, year by year. They must take account of the prevalence of disease, the age structure of the population, the formidable advances in clinical practice and all the other factors that affect the demand for services. Contrary to what is suggested in the motion put down by the Labour party, there has been a significant increase in the number of intensive care beds. As the House is aware, we are now looking again at how we can better manage those intensive care beds. Time and again, the advice is to bring them together in larger settings so that the health service can better cope with the ebbs and flows.

**Sir Michael Grylls** (Surrey, North-West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that most of us understand the special constituency interests of those who represent inner London, who are concerned about hospital closures? Despite that, the reform of health care in London is long overdue and the relevant report has been sitting around Whitehall for far too long. Most of us recognise my right hon. Friend's courage in taking up the reform and her determination to see that good health care is provided not only in London but in the provinces, to which a lot of people from London have moved out.

**Mrs. Bottomley:** I thank my hon. Friend for those remarks, which I appreciate.

It is important to set the record right about beds. We need the right balance. The number of beds closed in recent years does not match that quoted by the right hon.

*[Mrs. Bottomley]*

Member for Derby, South. In the past three years, we have seen a 30 per cent. increase in activity [HON. MEMBERS: "Activity?"] The number of beds in inner London has reduced, but the reduction has been more cautious than the level set out by the King's Fund and it is in line with the Tomlinson proposals.

We have always made it clear that the proposals need to be carefully implemented and monitored. We need to be watchful as we take forward those plans, and that is why the report of the inner London chief executives is so important. It is their duty to ensure that they plan services according to local need and get the balance right. Their report, which was published just the other day, made it clear that what is needed is not more acute beds in total, but a better disposition of specialist and general acute beds, and medical and surgical teams to meet the needs of patients. They have set up an action programme to address the problems that exist. It will provide better bed management, better discharge arrangements and will tackle bed blocking. That programme will ensure that there is better co-operation on emergency admissions.

The right hon. Member for Derby, South referred to Homerton. It has always been the case that there have been ebbs and flows in the pressure on hospitals. Co-operating carefully on those arrangements represents the best way of managing the health service. Not only are there more beds open at that hospital, but a great many more are planned. That hospital will be subject to a £30 million programme. The same is true of Northwick Park, where at least 30 beds have been opened this year and 40 will come through next year. We have identified the need for change in those hospitals and are addressing it.

**Ms Diane Abbott** (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): Will the Secretary of State give way?

**Mrs. Bottomley:** No.

**Ms Abbott:** Specifically on Homerton?

**Mrs. Bottomley:** I hope that the hon. Lady will understand if I do not give way. I have already spoken for a long time and if I do not make progress, hon. Members who want to speak may not have the opportunity to do so. I am sure that the hon. Lady will find an opportunity to speak later.

I must refer to some of the areas that have caused great concern. My right hon. Friend the Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke) has argued powerfully that the ethos, traditions and culture of St. Bartholomew's should be preserved as services move to Whitechapel. I agree with him. He knows that a task force chaired by Sir Ronald Grierson is examining alternative uses for the St. Bartholomew's-Smithfield site in keeping with its proud past. In addition, a working group led by the Corporation of London has been developing plans for the alternative provision of community services at St. Bartholomew's to meet local needs. Others have suggested that the name of St. Bartholomew's should live on in the title of the trust—I accept that—in practice as well as in spirit. *[Interruption.]* I am pleased to say that the trust is considering that suggestion and I hope that it will be able to make that announcement soon.

My right hon. Friend and my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) have queried the pace of change at the Guy's-St. Thomas's development. During consultation a number of modifications were made. Let me reassure my hon. Friend the Member for Chislehurst that the A and E at Guy's will not close until alternative services are ready to take its place and able to provide better care. Those services include improved primary care, the minor injuries unit and the alternative casualty units at King's, Lewisham and St. Thomas's.

The trust will continue to provide at Guy's a wide range of hospital services, many of them geared to the needs of local people. In fact, 80 per cent. of patients currently seen and treated at the hospital will continue to go there. In keeping with its pioneering traditions Guy's will be at the forefront of developing state-of-the-art diagnostic and day case and out-patient services. It will genuinely be a hospital of the future.

**Mr. Simon Hughes:** How can the Secretary of State accept the recommendation that a date be fixed for the closure of an A and E department when the number of people presenting to such departments is rising? How can she accept that recommendation when it is clear from the advice of the people who run that department that they need it for the foreseeable future and that it would be unsafe to predict when it will not be needed? The consultants say to a person that to remove an A and E department and leave a major hospital, which treats a huge number of out-patients, and which has in-patient beds, without an intensive care unit, will render it so dangerous that they will find it impossible to operate in those circumstances.

**Mrs. Bottomley:** The hon. Gentleman already knows that informing all our work on A and E services was the report by Sir Norman Browse and his team. We would not dream of accepting proposals if we were not satisfied that they conformed with the advice of the president of the Royal College of Surgeons and his team. The hon. Gentleman will also be aware that I have set not a date when the department will close, but one before which it will not close. I repeat my commitment that until or unless alternative arrangements are in place no final closure can take place.

I have sought not to speak at great length about the opportunities for medical schools and the link-up with the multi-faculty colleges at London university. The merger of Guy's and St. Thomas's offers a unique opportunity to develop the biomedical sciences campus on the Guy's site. It will become a major research and teaching campus as good as any in the country. I should also like to confirm again that Philip Harris house will be properly used—85 per cent. of the services it will provide will be those for which it was originally intended.

The future of Edgware hospital is of particular concern to some of my hon. Friends. A new £60 million hospital is being built at Barnet in north London, which brings to an end 25 years of uncertainty about the way forward for the two hospitals at Edgware and Barnet. Edgware hospital is not closing, because four out of five patients currently treated there will continue to attend.

As a result of the representations made by my hon. Friends, the opening of the proposed new minor accident treatment service will be brought forward to the earliest opportunity. They made a number of suggestions during the consultation period and subsequently, all of which I

have sought to heed, take seriously and to match with practical proposals. Both the minor accident treatment service unit at Edgware and the new fully equipped and staffed casualty department at Barnet will be well established before full-scale A and E services move from Edgware.

The trust is already discussing with local GPs a possible GP presence at the minor accident treatment service unit. I have sought and received assurances from the local health authority and the London ambulance service that extra investment will strengthen the ambulance service in that area. The health service is investing in full non-emergency transport at Edgware to serve those who need to go to other hospitals. In addition, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville), is having discussions with the Department of Transport about how we can improve transport arrangements further.

My hon. Friends the Members for Finchley (Mr. Booth) and for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) have argued strongly for the need to improve primary care in advance of the hospital changes. I am pleased to say that the regional health authority has decided to provide an additional £2 million—taking the total to £17 million—for improvements to family doctor and community services in the western part of Barnet, the area that is closest to Edgware hospital.

By 2000 we shall have spent more than £1 billion building a top-class health service in London. The programme of change has been preceded by an unprecedented amount of discussion, consultation and review. Decisions were needed to bring an end to uncertainty and delay for staff and patients alike.

**Mr. Dykes:** Will my right hon. Friend give way?

**Mrs. Bottomley:** I hope that my hon. Friend will bear with me, but I must bring my remarks to a close.

Now that the decisions have been made, it is vital that they are implemented sensitively, properly sequenced and carefully paced. For the period of transition, I give this seven-point pledge to the House. There will be no closures until alternative and better services are up and running. There will be modern emergency services, including an improved London ambulance service. We will continue to hold health authorities to account for providing comprehensive and effective services in each area, including a proper supply of beds to meet demand. Waiting times will improve further; the patients charter standards must be met.

**Mr. Dykes:** Will my right hon. Friend give way?

**Mrs. Bottomley:** I will not give way to my hon. Friend again, as I have already done so. We will continue to recruit and retain the very best doctors and nurses. The staff and the public will be involved in the changes so that they can see and contribute to the objectives. Finally, we will support innovation and development in teaching and research so that London maintains its prime position and we can invest in the next generation.

Since 1948, Parliament has given government the statutory duty to provide comprehensive health services for all who need them. We believe that we are building a health service in the capital that will serve our children and our grandchildren well, rather than the one that was right for our parents and grandparents—such is the phenomenal rate of medical advances. We have a crucial opportunity to prepare for the 21st century. The price of doing nothing—the price of Labour—would be to let our hospitals and our health service slip into decline and to fail London and Londoners. We are not prepared to pay that price.

We want a health service in which people can take pride. We shall succeed by holding firm and by being prepared to lead and not surrender. Edmund Burke said—*[Interruption.]*

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. Hon. Members may not like what the Secretary of State is saying, but she is entitled to be heard, just as the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) was entitled to be heard.

**Mrs. Bottomley:** Edmund Burke said:

"A state without the means of some change is without the means of its conservation".

So it is with the health service. The Conservative party did not win four general elections by backing away from tough and sometimes, in the short term, unpopular decisions. We did it by sticking to our principles. Our duty is clear and our courage is intact. We shall hold firm because the interests of our health service, our capital and the rest of the country depend upon it.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. Before I call the next hon. Member to speak, I remind the House of Madam Speaker's decision that there will be a limit of 10 minutes on all Back-Bench speeches.

**Mr. Harry Cohen** (Leyton): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. In her speech, the Secretary of State had an argument with my right hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) about hospital closures. The Secretary of State said that she would clarify those figures later. Hon. Members who have tabled parliamentary questions about hospital closures, including me, have received the answer that the Department of Health does not keep that information centrally. Some of us would regard it as inconceivable—

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order.

**Mr. Cohen:** It must have been lying—

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. I remind the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) that when the Speaker or the Deputy Speaker rises, the hon. Gentleman must resume his seat. It is perfectly clear that the hon. Gentleman is raising a matter of debate and of fact. The Chair is not responsible for the content of speeches.

**Mr. Cohen:** Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am not raising a point of debate. I am asking you to investigate the answers to those parliamentary questions because I think that false information was given to hon. Members.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** I thought that I made my point crystal clear: what is said in the House, whether it is correct or incorrect or falsely made, is not a matter for the Chair.

*[Madam Deputy Speaker]*

5.45 pm

**Mr. Simon Hughes** (Southwark and Bermondsey): Today's debate is crucial for hon. Members who believe that the announcement that the Secretary of State made before the recess is misguided, wrong and not in the best interests of the health service.

I shall address my initial remarks to my colleagues in the House who do not represent London constituencies and who often attend debates on the London health service assuming that London Members are simply trying to persuade Ministers to give London more than it deserves. There is always a danger of a divide-and-rule approach to such debates.

I ask the Secretary of State: does she believe that the money that is currently allocated to the London health service is a fair amount, given the proportion of the population who live in London and who use its health service? It could have been argued some years ago that London received more than its fair share of resources. In general terms, 15 per cent. of the health service was located in London but it received 20 per cent. of the funding, but that is no longer so. There is no evidence to suggest that London receives more than its fair share of resources. Indeed, the rising population in inner and outer London is sufficient to suggest that the balance may need to be readjusted in the future.

No one is arguing against the rest of the country having a decent, renewed health service. Londoners argue that those who live in London and those who are sent here by their doctors or consultants for treatment—some of the centres of excellence in London health provision will continue in our lifetime to treat people from all over the country—should receive a fair share of resources, and that that share should be allocated fairly.

The motion tabled by the Labour party does not argue that all change within the London health service should stop. On that basis, the motion will be supported not only by Opposition Members but by some Conservative Members.

I understand that the Secretary of State receives particularly voluminous advice from many experts and advisers whom she has cited. However, she has not tempered that advice with experience on the ground.

The Secretary of State knows that I have gained practical experience, particularly from the three hospitals that serve the community that I represent—Guy's, King's College and St. Thomas's. The experience of patients and practitioners no longer accords with what the Secretary of State considers to be the unqualified and unalterable advice that she receives from her advisers within and outside the Department of Health.

As to acute services, practitioners are saying that the number of people who are presenting themselves for treatment in casualty and accident and emergency departments is rising, not falling. The number of people on waiting lists for out-patient appointments is rising, not falling. Figures show that people had to wait for 16 weeks in 1991 and for 40 weeks in 1995. The number of people in intensive care unit beds is rising, not falling. Many intensive care units are not just full but overspilling into other bed provision, which is not prepared for intensive care use.

The trend, and this is not invented by politicians or based on political rhetoric, is towards more pressure on the health service in the capital city. The worry, which is supported by evidence, is that when people need the health services of the capital they regularly cannot be admitted to them.

When a doctor rings up for a bed, no emergency bed is available. When patients arrive at a hospital, there is no space in the ward. London hospitals are meant to have enough capacity, but patients end up being sent to Leeds. The evidence is abundantly clear that, day by day, London health services are not working.

**Mr. Duncan Smith:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Hughes:** I will not because we each have only 10 minutes and I want to respect that limit.

One hospital after another has regularly had to close its doors because it just cannot cope any more.

Let the Secretary of State not meet one point with an answer to a different one. Nobody argues against new facilities or that we do not want old buildings such as Hunt's house in Guy's hospital knocked down. Nobody argues that we do not want Philip Harris house, which was built at a cost of £150 million, to be opened. We are arguing exactly the opposite.

We want the best facilities. That is why the argument for Philip Harris house is so clear: it is the best building in the health service. It would be madness not to use it for the purpose for which it was designed and built. However, we do not want commitments to changes in the future that the present circumstances do not appear to justify.

The right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) made a hugely important point about the waste of public resources. The health service is expensive, as it should be. It should provide the best possible care for everyone, no matter how poor they may be. It is nonsense to plan new buildings on one site when we have buildings waiting to be used on another. That is not a good use of public resources.

The argument that we are trying to win today, and for which we seek support from Conservative Members, some of whom have declared their support, is not about trying to unravel the health service reforms or changing direction. I am trying to win the argument, as was the right hon. Member for Derby, South, that the evidence does not support the academic and so-called expert advice that the speed, pace and details of the proposals are compatible with the needs of the different parts of the capital city.

Let me choose one example. The Secretary of State for Health wrote to me about Guy's last month and used an argument that I have often heard before as part of her case for closing Guy's accident and emergency department, although I think that she now accepts that it may be impossible to close it even in 1998 or 1999. If it is not possible to close it then, it seems foolhardy to set a date at all because it might take another five, 10 or 15 years or might never need to be closed. Why say that it will certainly be closed when it might not be?

In her letter, the Secretary of State says that evidence shows that between 25 and 40 per cent. of people who attend accident and emergency could be better treated by their GP. That is not uncontradicted advice. It is not even the balance of the advice.

There is strong research evidence that only 20 per cent. or fewer of accident and emergency patients could be treated by their GP better or more safely. In any event, the figure may be much nearer to 25 per cent. than 40 per cent.

It is the failure to accept that there is another side of the story that concerns me as a Member who represents 80,000 people in an area with some of the worst scores on the indices of deprivation, morbidity and mortality. It also concerns the people themselves who are saying, "For heaven's sake, don't ask us to write blank cheques." They do not trust that a better new service will replace the old one until the new service is there and working. When the ambulances turn up, when people are not kept lying in trolleys and when they are seen by nurses who do not leave people unattended because they are so over-stretched that they cannot cope, we will believe that London's hospitals are working.

Today we must ask the Secretary of State why she is unwilling on the basis of what she has said to concede that her proposals are causing concern and fear to users of the service and to accept the advice of practitioners, who are arguing the same case.

I have two other points. First, it is not sufficient to go through a consultation process and then ignore its results. It is no good having a semblance of consultation in the health service without taking account of the concerns of the people who have responded to that request for information.

It would be different if national health service trusts were democratically elected or local health authorities were democratically accountable because then, at the end of day, accountable people would be making the difficult choices, but they are not. The people on those bodies are appointed.

When bodies that meet in secret and are accountable to the Secretary of State, who by definition is a party political person, make such decisions, they do not receive the automatic confidence of the public and the public do not feel that they are being listened to by the people who make the decisions. I ask the Secretary of State to say that no proposal will be pushed forward unless and until it has the support of those who were consulted about whether it was right or wrong.

I shall use our local circumstances in south-east London as an example of my last point, but it applies to Edgware and east London as well. Many of the people who have advised the Secretary of State have made it clear to her that there are preconditions for what she says being acceptable. Our local health commission said that it needed £28 million extra to deliver changes that it was proposing. There has been no guarantee of that extra money, although a request has been made to the region. That is symptomatic of the way in which people are being asked to trust the administrators of a service which at the moment they see is not delivering.

At the end of Secretary of State's speech, she made her pledge, which had seven points. If I had to describe the end of her speech, I would call it a statement made by a Snow White of the health service with seven dwarf pledges following behind. Her pledge was mere words, and it is not borne out by the money that is available or by the evidence.

Nobody argues against renewing the health service. We argue rather that the health service in London should be developed with the consent of the people who use it. As with policing, one should not run a health service without the consent of the people. If the Secretary of State persists, I fear that she and her colleagues will pay the political price. I would rather that she retrenched and retracted now and listened to the overwhelming view of health service users who say that she is has got it wrong and should slow down, listen to the people and look at the facts. They can help her get the health service that Londoners need and deserve far better than her experts and advisers and the people who are not in the front line of the changes that she recommends.

5.58 pm

**Mr. Peter Brooke** (City of London and Westminster, South): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes). Before the great Reform Act 1832, when there were six Members of Parliament for what is now my constituency, there were two Members for the rest of Middlesex and two Members for Southwark. It is because we both have ancient seats that we have ancient hospitals and common cause in connection with them.

This debate has been years in gestation—not just the years since the Tomlinson report but the 80 years to which the Government's motion refers. I have spoken in three preliminary debates since Trafalgar day last year. I have expressed my general support for what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is seeking to achieve. There is no point in repeating the arguments that have already been rehearsed. I have stressed Bart's own recognition, as far back as 1977, that London specialties needed to be rationalised and concentrated.

A month ago, I criticised my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for not coming to the House to make a statement. Although I do not think that the Executive should take the legislature for granted, I confess that I felt a little like Shakespeare's second murderer. I admire and respect my right hon. Friend, not least for her courage in tackling London's endemic problems, which have remained untackled for so long, and by so many of her predecessors. However, I have said time almost without number, and not least to my right hon. Friend, that merging an institution as great as Bart's is a highly delicate venture.

The three great opportunities for this country in the post-industrial society are government, education and medicine. Bart's features in two of those. Thus, the survival of its ethos and reputation in the merged institution is critical, as it is a national asset. For them to survive in an atmosphere of intense change requires a high sensitivity to people as well as to detail. On that score, the Government's ultimate handling of Bart's has been inadequate.

I am curtailed by the restraints of time, but I shall cite a series of instances, in no particular order. The background is that Bart's has been happy to engage in the merger but the issue is whether it should be on one site or on two. The failure of public education about Bart's future remains stunning. Long ago, I recall the noble Lord

*[Mr. Peter Brooke]*

Flowers saying of the urban transportation of irradiated fuel that, although he might know it to be safe, what mattered was that the public should believe it to be so.

The public do not believe the Government's case about Bart's and the health authority's handling of the responses to the consultation will not have improved credibility. I acknowledge that there were several options in the consultation document. Because they did not respond to the document's precise terminology, those who asked for Bart's to remain open, which was implicitly a vote for the two-site option, were treated as having expressed no preference.

In the preparations for the new hospital, there are 32 clinical directorates. A total of 22—more than two thirds—are headed by staff from the Royal London hospital, and nine are headed by staff from Bart's. The Royal London is the host in the merger, and I can see no evidence of a change in welcome such as I said was needed as far back as the Trafalgar day debate last year.

Next I come to the press release of 8 March from the Royal Hospitals trust which is headlined:

"Royal Hospitals Trust hits back at defective report."

I referred to that obliquely in the House on 5 April. The press release was an attack on the motivation of Bart's medical council and the professional reputation of the York Health Economics Consortium. It was issued five days before the health authority met to reach conclusions on the consultation.

Dr. Posnett, the director of the York Health Economics Consortium of the University of York, did not go public with his reactions to the press release. On 17 March he wrote a reasoned letter of rebuttal to the chief executive of the trust. Nearly eight weeks later the chief executive has not replied. Dr. Posnett was specifically seeking to avoid a public row. However, to ignore a professional letter is not professional. Circulation of the correspondence to the trust board was first promised and then denied.

A single press release would not normally warrant such attention, but the conclusion of the York Health Economics Consortium had been that the business case for a £200 million investment on a single site at the Royal London had been insufficiently substantial to warrant not looking at alternative options more closely. In terms of the sensitivity of which I have spoken, the press release was crass and the silence since then has been contemptible.

On 21 October last year and on 5 April this year my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and her hon. Friend the Minister of State said things about Bart's which history has since proved to be inaccurate. I do not quarrel with that because Ministers are only as good as the briefing that they receive. I hope that the briefing on the York report has been better, not least because of the circumstances.

Given the Secretary of State's concern to transfer the ethos of Bart's to Whitechapel and the health authority's confidence in the consultation document that this can be done, the financial aspects, although important, are academic by comparison with the practical consequences of this serial handling.

On 21 October I spoke of the need to ensure that the staff at Bart's should not haemorrhage away if the ethos was to survive. My right hon. Friend will know the figures. Against a background where, historically, few people have left Bart's—11 people have left, or will leave—the medical college since last August, two more are thought to be about to leave and seven others are at risk. Four of those earned absolute stars in the 1992 research ratings competition. A haemorrhage of that sort runs the risk of being fatal.

What should an individual Member do? I feel no sense of community with the chancers on the Opposition Front Bench. The predecessor of the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) said that the status quo was no longer an option in London, yet the right hon. Lady comes to the debate without the courtesy of publishing her party's NHS policies in advance.

As the hon. Member for the City I also represent the western tip of east London. With the other hon. Members representing east London, for whom Bart's is a neighbourhood hospital, I do feel a sense of community. I am careful of the company I keep but hon. Members representing east London are entirely proper company at this time. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has said that she will pay attention to the view of the House and I must, on current knowledge, vote against her.

I realise that many of my hon. Friends will wish to give my right hon. Friend the benefit of the doubt. I would not ask them to come into the Opposition Lobby for they do not have the same knowledge of Bart's as I have. However, in a party such as ours, I ask them to pause for a moment to decide whether they should give Bart's the benefit of the doubt and abstain. I have seen the haemorrhage of staff already and I dread the haemorrhage that is to come. I cannot believe that any of my hon. Friends could read the York report, with its commentary on the methodology used to reach the single-site decision, without having a scintilla of doubt about what the trust, the authority and the Department are up to.

The financial figures are, in any case, finely balanced in a world where the Chelsea and Westminster figures could overrun as they did. If the House endorses the death warrant on Bart's, each and every one who votes for it is responsible. I respect the Secretary of State's certainty that she is right, for she knows how appallingly her reputation will be undermined if she turns out to be wrong.

My reading of the Government's capital investment manual reveals that it asks under the heading "Options":

"have there been any changes in available options and/or all these additional options that should now be considered?"

My reading of the York report reveals that consultation on alternative options should have occurred and should still occur.

On Bart's, I close with some words by Larkin, an unbeliever who said in church:

"It pleases me to stand in silence here;
A serious house on serious earth it is,
In whose blent air all our compulsions meet,
Are recognised, and robed as destinies.
And that much can never be obsolete,
Since someone will forever be surprising
A hunger in himself to be more serious,
And gravitating with it to this ground,
Which he once heard, was proper to grow wise in,
If only that so many dead lie round."

6.8 pm

**Mr. Brian Sedgemore** (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): It is an enormous privilege to have heard the speech made by the right hon. Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke). We have always held him in high esteem and today, for the first time for a long time, we had a reaffirmation of honour in the House of Commons. We can only salute and applaud the right hon. Gentleman for the grace with which he delivered his speech and for the difficulty with which he has made his decision, for the moment, about his conflicting loyalties. We all know that loyalty to party often conflicts with loyalty to constituents, conscience and principles. The right hon. Gentleman has told us that, for the moment, he believes that it is right that he should go along with his loyalty to his constituents, his conscience and his principles. We salute him.

At the weekend, the Secretary of State called in some of the press and told them that she had a bundle of letters in support of her plans to close hospitals in London. I wonder how her bundle of letters compared in quantity to the 1 million people who signed a petition stating that Bart's should not be closed and to the 1 million people who signed a petition stating that Guy's should not be closed. I wonder how it compared in quality with the letters that Professor Lesley Rees, the dean of Bart's medical college, received from 344 heads of departments from 42 countries around the world and the 245 letters that he received from medical and scientific institutions from around the globe. I wonder how her little pile of letters compared with the shoal of letters—I have a copy of each one—that the Prime Minister received from top medical experts from around the world.

On the evidence of the correspondence that I have seen—I have looked through it all—the Secretary of State has been charged, indicted and found guilty by the public and by the medical establishment, not just in this country, but worldwide. It only remains for the House tonight to pass sentence and to seek retribution for what the Secretary of State has done.

Two weeks ago, the Prime Minister came to Hackney to praise Hackney council for its inner-city initiatives. He said that he wished there could be cross-party support for them and that Conservative boroughs as well as Labour boroughs could follow the example of Hackney. I was delighted to see him there and discussed some of the problems with him.

Hackney council said that it would work with anyone providing that it was in the interests of the council. It said that it would like some support from Conservative councillors on some of the steps that it wanted to take. Conservative councillors have voted for a motion that is an unequivocal indictment of the Secretary of State's proposal to close Bart's and the London chest hospital. They will be delighted with the decision of the right hon. Member for City of London and Westminster, South tonight. I think that they, like many other people, will be wondering anxiously about how other Conservative Members will respond to the debate.

Yesterday I visited Bart's to open an exhibition of paintings by patients in the Strauss ward—the only ward at Bart's that deals exclusively with those receiving treatment for mental illness. The exhibition took place in St. Bartholomew the Less, a beautiful church inside the hospital.

The irony is that the Strauss ward was opened on Wednesday 25 May 1992 by Her Majesty the Queen. Members of the royal family, including the Queen, have all been instructed that they are no longer to pay visits to Bart's, for fear that the anger that already exists due to the impending closure will be made worse. I asked yesterday and I ask the House today: what sort of a society is it where the Queen can be told by second-rate politicians that she cannot go in to the world's oldest and best hospital, even to open new wards or to see and respect some of its past glories?

Over lunch yesterday, I spoke to some of the consultants. I did not intend to stay for lunch, so none of the consultants were hand picked, and we had a general talk about what was going on. It was interesting that they all, without exception, said that they were angry and bemused. They said that, when challenged to produce a profit inside the internal market, they did precisely that. They said that, when asked to enter into a merger with the Royal London hospital, they did so in good faith and thought that it might work, only to be told shortly afterwards that it was not to be a merger, but the closure of St. Bartholomew's hospital. They accused the Secretary of State of bad faith and a lack of integrity.

The consultants used words similar to those that I heard the hon. Member for Hendon, North (Sir J. Gorst) use on television. They said that they thought that the Secretary of State did not listen and that some of her arguments were incomprehensible. Some of the consultants were ruder and said that they thought that the Secretary of State was unintelligent, was living in a fantasy world created by her civil servants and had lost all contact with reality.

I remember when the hon. Member for Hendon, North said movingly on television that there was an important thing called a political process, in which one had to take note of people's fears, people's aspirations and—a phrase that I particularly remember—even people's prejudices. I do not believe that the 2 million people who have signed the petition are all prejudiced, but even if they were, it would be extraordinary for a Secretary of State to say, "You 2 million people have had your say, now listen to the experts. I am going to get on with it and take the advice of my civil servants." That does not seem to be the way to conduct politics seriously.

The right hon. Member for City of London and Westminster, South spoke about the haemorrhaging of the centre of excellence at St. Bartholomew's hospital and of the staff that were leaving. The dean of the medical college yesterday faxed me some updated figures. I am afraid that they are even slightly worse than the right hon. Gentleman said. I have the fax and the names—obviously, I will not read out the names.

The figures show that seven professors and six senior lecturers have already been lost and are going to such places as Sheffield, Manchester, Oxford, University college hospital and the Royal Free hospital. They also show that four professors, three senior lecturers and a recorder are at risk.

Some people may say that the figures amount to only 20 people and there are hundreds of people carrying out research at Bart's, but it is important to remember that each senior figure who goes will take a clutch of research workers with him or her. Those research workers do not just carry out abstract medical research; they help with

*[Mr. Brian Sedgemore]*

the provision of clinical services at Bart's. They have been helping, not only at Bart's, but at the Homerton and the Queen Elizabeth hospital for children in Hackney.

One does not need to be super intelligent to realise that the Homerton could seriously suffer in the future because it is no longer linked to a teaching hospital. It does not have the links that it should have with the Royal London hospital and St. Bartholomew's hospital. We need to consider medicine in east London in the context of the Royal London hospital, St. Bartholomew's hospital, the Homerton hospital and, probably, hospitals in Newham, and come up with a sensible solution and sensible amalgamations. There is no need for war between St. Bartholomew's hospital and the Royal London hospital.

A few weeks ago the Secretary of State said that the ethos of Bart's could be transferred to the Royal London. From a sedentary position my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), who was here at the time, asked how the bloody hell we could transfer an ethos. I phoned up the Department of Health and was told that it could be bottled and transported. I was told that the extract of Bart's would be issued in bottles to each of the patients moved to the Royal London hospital.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris):** Order. I call Sir Nicholas Scott.

6.18 pm

**Sir Nicholas Scott** (Chelsea): Hanging in my office in the Norman Shaw North building is a cartoon that was given to me in 1987. It was drawn by that marvellous cartoonist, Marc. It shows two Back Benchers—I think that my hon. Friends would probably recognise them—and one is saying to the other:

"I used to have this nightmare that she'd made me Minister for Northern Ireland, but lately it's been Minister of Health".

I do not think that many of us in the House envy my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and her team of Ministers some of the difficult decisions that they are having to face as they try to ensure that constituency Members of Parliament and existing institutions are properly looked after while at the same time ensuring that we have a health service for London that is up to date as new developments and new techniques are introduced into the health care of our capital city. They have a difficult job, but we too have a difficult job. I ask my right hon. and hon. Friends to understand how difficult that job sometimes is when, as my right hon. Friend the Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke) said, marvellous institutions with long histories are too easily challenged and face extinction.

We look at the arguments and the statistics in the Tomlinson report. We refer to a report by Professor Jarman, which challenges many of those ideas and statistics. We listen to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and to my hon. Friend the Minister on the "Today" programme, with a soothing and, I am sure, accurate flow of statistics to challenge some of the arguments that are being put against them. We then look at the *Evening Standard* and the claims of the community health councils. It is difficult for us, as constituency Members of Parliament, to see where the real value in the arguments lies.

I know that my right hon. Friend wants to get it right not just for today's London but for tomorrow's London, and that gives her several difficult considerations.

Sometimes, too little notice is taken of a number of factors other than the existing population and the existing needs of the population of central London. The population of central London does not consist entirely of those who have a residence in central London. We have a huge additional daytime population whose needs must be met by many hospitals in the city centre. We also have a considerable number of overseas residents, visitors and tourists who might need attention by our health service. Many visitors come to this country specifically to take advantage of the excellent health service in central London, and they bring with them other economic advantages to the centre of London.

There are two other factors that we should bear in mind when we look at the pattern of health provision in central London. I understand the first factor, because the Department in which I recently served shared some of the burden of it with the Department of Health. I refer to the policy of care in the community—perfectly proper and perfectly understandable. There is no doubt at all in my mind that a significant number of those who have been released from institutional care and put into community care packages need from time to time to go into mainstream hospitals in central London because of a deterioration in their condition. Perhaps there is no other place to which they can turn to be properly looked after.

We should not ignore the possibility of terrorism as we look at the need for hospitals in central London. I am not talking about Northern Ireland and its influence on this side of the water, which we have had to endure for many years. However, bearing in mind what happened in Oklahoma and the growing number of organisations that seem to believe that they can turn to terrorism to publicise and achieve their ends, we must take account of that trend as we consider proper health care provision in our major cities, particularly in London.

The second factor that all Members of Parliament in central London can regard with pride, and for which we must fight to ensure its continuity, is that London maintains its widely recognised reputation throughout the world as a centre for health excellence. We must not lose that. I know that my right hon. Friend wants to keep that reputation and, indeed, to enhance it, and it should be a major factor in our consideration. We should consider not only the existing population who need such services in central London, but those from across the world who come to take advantage of them.

I have three major hospitals in my constituency. One is the Chelsea and Westminster hospital—a new, flourishing, expensive hospital. Whether in today's terms that hospital would ever have been built is not for me to say, but it exists and it is performing extremely well. It is still not used to absolute capacity. It has an excellent contract with the Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster health agency. I believe that it has a glittering future.

Since that hospital opened in early 1993, the number of in-patients and day-patients has steadily increased by more than 15 per cent. in each of the two years that the hospital has been open. Attendances at the accident and emergency department have increased from fewer than 40,000 in the first year to more than 60,000 this year. I recently paid a visit to that A and E unit, and I speak very strongly in support of the service that it provides.

That hospital has also introduced something that exists elsewhere—I hope that the practice will steadily increase—and that is a rota of general practitioners serving in the A and E department in the evenings. They are able to cope with the less serious visitors to the department, just as GPs would in their own surgeries. We should encourage that development in our hospitals.

The Royal Marsden hospital is also in my constituency. On 21 April, my hon. Friend the Minister was asked whether he had had any meetings about the closure of the Royal Marsden hospital and whether he had any plans for its closure and he answered none to both questions. I hope that I can count on him to continue to use that precise and brief answer to subsequent questions. There is no doubt that the Royal Marsden is a fine institution with a glittering reputation for high-quality research, and it deserves to flourish in future.

The third major hospital in my constituency is the Royal Brompton. My hon. Friend the Minister knows that board members of the Royal Brompton hospital have invited companies to meet them with a proposition to introduce a new ambulatory care centre without beds, to be known as the Royal Brompton clinic, which might be developed using the private finance initiative that the Government recently introduced. The private sector has shown great interest in that proposition. We have the chance, in Sydney street in my constituency, to have a new day clinic for respiratory and heart cases, along the lines of the Mayo clinic in the United States of America, and not costing a penny to the Exchequer but provided by private finance. It would be a tremendous addition to the quality of health care in central London.

I very much hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and her team of Ministers will be able to overcome any objections that may be encountered elsewhere in the Government in order to bring that imaginative scheme to a proper conclusion.

My right hon. Friend has shown great political courage in the way in which she has tackled her job. She needs, too, clear judgment about the future needs of London against the background that I have sought to describe in this brief speech. In the months and years ahead, that will be a difficult task for her, but I wish her well.

6.27 pm

**Mr. Jim Dowd** (Lewisham, West): The right hon. Members for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke) and for Chelsea (Sir N. Scott) have injected the reasonable and measured tone that such debates sometimes lack. It is a shame that, on occasions, our debates are reduced almost to cliché and stereotyping. The idea that this debate is an argument about London versus the rest of the country is not only inaccurate but fraudulent, and those who peddle it do so to try to obscure what is happening in London.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) said, the debate is of much greater significance; it is about the shape, nature and purpose of the national health service after the market reforms. What is happening in London hospitals today is only because they have been at the sharp end of those reforms, and it will ripple into other parts of the country before long.

The allocation of resources to health will always be difficult for any Government. I speak as somebody who was a member of the area health authority for Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark from 1976, and who became a member of the district health authority for Lewisham and north Southwark, which succeeded it.

I and my colleagues on that authority spent many of those 16 years ensuring that we got the best value for money. Many of our decisions were extremely difficult. Sometimes we were comparing apples with oranges, but decisions had to be taken in the best interests of the people in the area.

In one of today's newspapers, the Secretary of State apparently attacks me for not supporting the Government's investment in the improvements to Lewisham hospital, among others. That was another piece of shorthand. Over the years, I was deeply involved in what became phase 2 at Lewisham and phase 3 at Guy's.

Philip Harris house has already been mentioned this evening. I am pleased with what has been achieved. My major concern, and the reason why I am speaking this evening, is that so much of that achievement is being put at risk. The improvements at Lewisham are welcome, but they have not achieved the objective of providing a service adequate to the needs of the area.

When the proposals for the future of Guy's and St. Thomas's were put out for consultation by the current health authority, the majority of responses outside the area immediately surrounding Guy's hospital were from people in my constituency who overwhelmingly used Lewisham and King's. That is because those people know that Lewisham and King's cannot cope at the moment, let alone if the accident and emergency department at Guy's were to the close.

In 1976, when I started on the health authority, there were about 16 hospitals in Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark. Today there are four. Anybody who says the idea of change is new and needs to be faced now is misleading himself. Change in the provision of health care in London has been a fact of life, certainly since the formation of the national health service.

Many of those hospital closures were bitterly contested at the time. The decision to close Sydenham children's hospital had the capacity to be extremely emotional. I supported the closure of that hospital for a number of reasons, not least of which was how the process was approached. Ultimately, the authority and the clinicians convinced people in the area that a better service could be provided elsewhere—at Lewisham hospital. It was only with some reluctance that the people in the area agreed to the closure of Sydenham children's hospital, and subsequently moved to Lewisham hospital, which is doing very well.

That element of consent is totally lacking in the issues before us this evening. What has been most clear in the process post-Tomlinson is that change has been pushed forward almost with a life of its own. Theoretically, the people of London were consulted, in so far as they were given the opportunity to write letters to the Secretary of State and their local health authorities, but there is a widespread feeling that the consultation was a sham, and that nothing they said, except at the very periphery, was taken into account, and their views had no impact on the decisions that were taken. The issues that we are discussing this evening involve public confidence as well as health care provision.

*[Mr. Jim Dowd]*

The timetable for Tomlinson was set four or five years ago. A great deal of contrary authoritative information has emerged as the process has unfolded, and there is some doubt as to whether Tomlinson has achieved its objective. For example, since 1992, bed closures across the country have reached some 3,000, and 45 per cent. or more than 1,300 were in London alone. That shows how rapidly health care provision—certainly acute provision—has changed in London. Mention has been made of the Jarman report, the work of the King's Fund and others.

It is not reasonable, particularly in the case of Guy's, though the same case can be made for other hospitals, that no alternatives have been produced. The "Save Guy's Campaign"—I pay tribute to the hon. Members for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) and for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims), and to my hon. Friend the Member for Dulwich (Ms Jowell), who have done so much work for that campaign—got KPMG Peat Marwick to carry out an extensive and detailed analysis of the options available under two or three site configurations, in concert with Guy's, St. Thomas's, University and King's College hospitals. Nobody said that it was the perfect blueprint, but those proposals made it clear that there was room for a reasoned and informed debate to decide on an alternative to the current proposals.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House are concerned about the proposals for accident and emergency provision at various hospitals, because the accident and emergency department is the heart of a hospital. All experience shows that, once the casualty department is closed, before the decline of the rest of the hospital is simply a matter of time. It is sometimes accelerated and sometimes delayed, but it is inevitable. That is why the accident and emergency unit at Guy's is critical for people in south-east London who have been at the forefront of change in acute provision in London.

A perfectly reasonable argument has unfolded over the years for the rationalisation of specialties. The arguments are far more technical, although the assessment of their benefit is easier to calculate than that for accident and emergency provision. The rationalisation of specialties will always cause dispute, but there is more broad agreement, certainly in the light of technical and technological developments, about how developments should unfold. Accident and emergency provision is an entirely different matter, as that is how people define their local hospitals.

The hospitals in south-east London, including Guy's, cannot cope with the current demand. Speaking to a friend, I asked after his mother, who is one of my constituents in Sydenham. He informed me that she had been very ill with pneumonia, and that at one stage her GP wanted to admit her to Lewisham hospital. He said that had there been a bed available, she would have been admitted.

When I asked him what he meant by that, he said that, when they had asked for a bed at Lewisham, Hither Green or Guy's, no beds were available, so she stayed at home. Fortunately, she is better now, but those decisions cause not only distress to the individuals concerned but untold distress, inconvenience and worry to their families when they are given medical advice that they should be admitted to hospital but they cannot get in.

I was interested to hear the Secretary of State further refine the delay in announcing the closure of Guy's. She has now given a date before which it will not be closed. That is another tactical retreat, which will enable her to come back and steal the show by announcing a date 20 years on from that, and by then we might have dealt with many of the issues relating to Guy's. The announcement of the delay in itself shows how overwhelming pressure has been against the proposals of the trust.

The trusts are unresponsive, and the performance of the London ambulance service remains a source of considerable concern to all of us in London. Sadly, the figures are deteriorating, after a marginal improvement.

The Secretary of State's decisions are virtually irreversible, but the motion provides an opportunity to think against before it is too late for the people of London and the NHS they prize.

6.37 pm

**Mr. David Mellor** (Putney): It is a pleasure to follow the speech of the hon. Member for Lewisham (Mr. Dowd), who was extensively involved in the health service. I agree with a number of the points he made about health services in London that were refreshingly free of the partisan camp that so often disfigures such occasions. There has been a measured quality to the debate that might not have been anticipated, given some of its pre-publicity.

One of the reasons that impelled me to speak was my anger at the campaign of vilification that has been mounted against my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in recent weeks. It is inevitable in the extremely difficult waters in which she has to fish.

As one of those who took on the job of Minister of Health not long after the cartoon to which my right hon. Friend the Member for Chelsea (Sir N. Scott) referred, I can assure him that, of all the posts I occupied in 11 years in government, health was far and away the most stressful and difficult. The Archangel Gabriel himself would have difficulty emerging in pristine condition from occupying that post.

It was a genuine pleasure to be in the House to hear the exceptionally eloquent and stylish speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke). The fact that he takes the view that he does is a sign of how difficult is the task of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

All of us who care about the health service in London will be concerned about some things that are happening, and all have reservations about some of the detail of the proposals. However, overall there is no doubt that that which my right hon. Friend is doing needs in some part—probably the greater part—to be done.

It cannot be ignored or avoided by anybody who wants to discharge effectively the office of Secretary of State for Health with any distinction, particularly in the eye of history. I hope that it will be possible to conduct debates without trying personally to vilify the holder of an office merely because that individual cannot shrink from taking difficult decisions.

I need not rehearse the justifications for Government policies. London is no longer the place to which patients from all over the country must come for a range of specialist treatment. It should be a matter of pride that, under this Government, we have for the first time a truly

national health service. One can have a heart transplant at the Freeman hospital in Newcastle, and St. James's hospital in Leeds is a European leader in liver surgery. Nobody is far from a modern hospital that can fulfil almost all their needs.

Whether we like it or not, the transformation of some central London hospitals from great centres of excellence offering services to a substantial part of the nation to district general hospitals was always going to be difficult and painful. That does not mean that some of the decisions and detail should not be examined, and I cannot quarrel with a number of the points made on behalf of Guy's and Bart's. It is clear that London could not go on the way it was.

The right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) has left the Chamber. It would have helped if at some point in her speech she had recognised that the process of reducing the number of hospital beds in London began under the last Labour Government, which established the London Health Planning Consortium—although it reported in the first 12 months of this Government.

My hon. Friend the Member for Reading, East (Sir G. Vaughan), who was Minister of State for Health at the time, will remember that the consortium recommended 6,200 bed reductions overall, amounting to 20 to 25 per cent. of central London's bed stock. If, by some miracle, Labour had won the 1979 general election, presumably it would have embarked on much the same course, because it set in hand the first substantive report.

I longed—in the course of a speech that lasted half an hour and seemed much longer—for the right hon. Member for Derby, South to say what Labour, which we are now meant to see as a credible and serious party of government, would do to deal with London's health service. It is deplorable that we were treated to an opportunistic assault on the Government, merely for being the people who must run the health service.

If one day—contrary to our wishes and expectations—the right hon. Member for Derby, South became Secretary of State for Health, the idea that people would be cheering her through the streets six months after she had taken office is ludicrous—the right hon. Lady, in her innermost thoughts, must realise how deeply ludicrous.

It is also ludicrous for the Labour party to imagine for one moment that it can get away, in the run-up to a general election, with making low-road points about the Government. The Opposition must say what they intend. They made that mistake before. They are unaccustomed to answering substantive points, and fall apart in the run-up to an election. In their private thoughts—although they would not admit this—they must be only too aware that that is the likely fate that could still overtake them, however full of optimism they are at the moment.

I will turn to one or two points of substance. I made it clear that I accept that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State must take the steps she has, but it is inevitable that there will be resentment on these Benches and everywhere else if it appears that the health service that was subject to the major reforms introduced by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke) are still being run according to the principles of a group of faceless people at different tiers, making decisions of fundamental importance as to which institutions remain open and which do not.

I was there at the formation of the policy, and it was always my understanding that the aim of the reforms was to empower patients and their doctors, and that the new mechanisms were to be responsive to their choices. The whole purpose of self-governing hospital trusts was to allow hospitals to respond in a much freer way to patients than before and to offer services whose popularity or otherwise would make it possible, with cash following the patient, for institutions to succeed or fail.

A number of us find it difficult that a number of manifestly successful institutions can nevertheless be challenged by what appears to be a return to the old-style dirigiste principles that I hoped had gone out of the window with the advent of the reforms. I say that in relation to Queen Mary's University hospital, Roehampton. I am grateful to my right hon. Friend and to the predecessor to my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Mr. Malone) for determining last year that the threat to which Queen Mary's was subject should be lifted.

**Mr. Sedgemore:** Now we understand.

**Mr. Mellor:** I shall fight for the hospital in my constituency, as the hon. Gentleman fights for his. If I do so more successfully than the hon. Gentleman, he can draw his own conclusions.

Of the four hospitals in south-west London that were under scrutiny, Queen Mary's University was the hospital that doctors and patients regarded most highly. That was a reason for promoting its cause, and that cause was successful.

The problem for the health service is that there are too many cooks stirring this particular broth. I particularly draw to the attention of my hon. Friend the Minister the role of purchasing authorities. At present, Queen Mary's hopes to pioneer a new way of making hospitals more responsive to community needs through the rapid diagnostic centre, for which the region has already made £2 million funding available for the coming year. However, Kingston and Richmond health authority is now intervening and holding a pistol at the head of Queen Mary's, saying that, unless it is prepared to announce plans for closer co-operation with Kingston hospital, the investment cannot proceed.

It is the role of purchasing authorities not to usurp such functions, but to facilitate the choices that doctors and their patients make. If I walked down Putney high street today, none of my constituents would be able to identify one member of those health authorities. The Government would get the blame if things went wrong.

As my right hon. Friend and her colleagues have found, trip wires are set for them by people who are grinding their own axes and who hold no responsibility for maintaining public confidence in the health service or for ensuring that a manageable pace of change is promoted. Against that background, it is extremely important that processes go forward with a recognition that there are political elements in this that are too important to be left to the experts.

6.48 pm

**Mr. John Austin-Walker** (Woolwich): It is timely to remind the Minister of the comments of the hon. Member for Hendon, North (Sir J. Gorst) on 5 April, when he asked the Secretary of State:

"Does my right hon. Friend accept that democratic politics is about delivering to people what the majority want, and not about telling the majority of people what they should have?"

He said:

"she is doing the wrong thing, in the wrong way, at the wrong time and in the wrong place."—[*Official Report*, 5 April 1995; Vol. 257, c. 1738.]

The hon. Gentleman was referring to the problems relating to Edgware general hospital, but the same applies to other Greater London hospitals, such as Oldchurch and Greenwich district.

When I visited Edgware, I was struck by the lobby outside. Those people were not the usual rent-a-crowd lobby that one might have expected outside a hospital proposed for closure. I was handed a leaflet by a constituent of the right hon. Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson), who I believe was also a member of his party, relating to Edgware. It said:

"Five CHCs agree with the people, all the local MPs agree with the people, the GPs agree with the people. Those who want to close Edgware have no friends."

The Secretary of State and the Minister for Health seem incapable of listening to any advice from any source with any contact with the service that is being delivered.

One comment that has been made to me in relation to Edgware, which has also been made in relation to the Brook, Greenwich district and the move of Oldchurch to Harold Wood, concerns the beds that will be lost in the process. I am continually told by the Secretary of State and the Minister that the new proposals take into account the changes in practice, developments and techniques, the increase in day surgery and the shorter stay in hospital, and that that is why there may be a bed loss.

That might have some credence if there were spare beds at the moment. But in all those hospitals, not only are there no spare beds, but bed occupancy is higher than the Minister recommends as a reasonable level and it is achieved by the use of trolleys and beds in corridors.

Hon. Members who have been patients awaiting an operation will appreciate that, no matter how routine an operation is for the hospital, for the patient it is a traumatic experience. To have to psych oneself up and prepare for the trauma of an operation only to be told on the day of or the day before the operation that no bed is available is not the kind of hospital service that people in London deserve or expect.

The Secretary of State referred in her opening remarks to the Brook hospital and neurosurgery. She says that she wants to locate neurosurgery services close to an institute of academic excellence, close to the Institute of Psychiatry at the Maudsley. Why does she not talk to the neurosurgeons at the Brook hospital and throughout London who question the rationale of locating neurosurgery with a psychiatric unit?

No one denies that some patients who need neurosurgery may at some stage require some psychiatric services. But neurosurgery should be accessible to patients and located close to a major trauma centre. The hon. Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) spoke about taking services out of central London to the areas that they serve. I remind the Minister that the Brook neurosurgery service and the Brook cardiothoracic service serve the people of south-east London and north-west Kent. To move those services to Guy's, St. Thomas's and King's, further into central London, makes no sense at all to the people of Gravesham, Chislehurst or Old Bexley and Sidcup.

It is not just Labour Members who have made such representations. The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath), the Father of the House, has called for a meeting with the Secretary of State to discuss the Brook neurosurgery services. Those services should move with the rest of the Brook hospital services into the new Queen Elizabeth military hospital. But if they were to go to Queen Mary's, Sidcup, I would not complain, because at least they would be located in a key area serving the sub-region.

Dermatology services do not receive a great deal of publicity, and people do not think that they are particularly important, but they are one of the most heavily used medical specialties. We have talked about the loss of beds. London has seen 70 per cent. of dermatology beds disappear. The dermatologists do not argue that all those beds need to be maintained. They accept that there can be some rationalisation of beds and their location in centres of excellence. But with the disappearance of those beds has gone 60 per cent. of the dedicated dermatology nurses who would be required to provide the services in out-patient clinics and in the community. Why were the dermatology services not the subject of a specialty review and why was there no input from the London dermatology planning group in any of the Minister's considerations? Those matters need to be considered.

The Minister will know that the Select Committee has considered the London ambulance service. I do not want to speak at great length about that, but I say simply that it is on the record that almost every person who gave evidence to the Select Committee said that the drastic reduction in accident and emergency units in London had been a contributory factor to the problems of the London ambulance service.

People talk about the response times of the London ambulance service improving, for which, at the end of the day, the Minister is responsible, but in the key area of the rapid response time there has been virtually no improvement during the past two years since the Minister has taken up the matter.

The right hon. Member for Chelsea (Sir N. Scott) referred to psychiatric services. I agree with all the points that he made. We have heard about over-occupancy of beds in London. Nowhere is that more apparent than in the area of psychiatry. My local hospital is talking about bed occupancy rates of 120 per cent. We have heard of patients from Sidcup having to be flown to Leeds for acute services. In psychiatry, it is not uncommon for patients from Greenwich and Woolwich to have to go as far afield as Oxford or Woking on a regular basis. A consultant psychiatrist has said that it is not uncommon for patients to have to wait some 36 hours to be placed and for telephone calls to have to be made to up to 35 different hospitals. That does not imply a pattern of over-provision in London.

I want finally to say a word about the Tomlinson-Jarman debate. Tomlinson was considering acute services in inner London, not the totality of health services across London. I do not think that anyone, certainly not Professor Tomlinson, would dispute the figures that have now been put forward on the totality of care in London by Professor Jarman. In the conclusion of his article in the *British Medical Journal*, Professor Jarman says:

"It is clear that neither hospital use by London residents, nor the availability of hospital beds, nor considerations of relative efficiency provide a case for a reduction of the total bed capacity in London . . . It is important that any changes should be considered in the context of London's transport system and the particular problems in primary care and social services, relatively longer hospital waiting lists, below average availability of places in residential homes, and the increasing pressure on available hospital beds."

That is why so many Conservative Members are so concerned. We all accept that there is a need for change in London, but the pace of change and the kind of change that is being proposed are wrong.

With regard to the Government's assumption about the improper use of resources, we all accept that primary care in London is underdeveloped, but the secondary care should not be taken away before the improvements in primary care are put in place.

6.57 pm

**Sir Rhodes Boyson** (Brent, North): The proposals for Edgware hospital have probably given rise to the greatest cause for concern in my constituency in the 21 years that I have represented it. People in London have a certain expectation of their hospitals. They are used to having specialist hospitals—such as Bart's and Guy's—in the centre, with a spread of friendly little hospitals around. That is why they feel so strongly about Edgware hospital.

We all accept that there must be reorganisation. We all accept that experts must be consulted. But I do not believe in the rule of experts. Experts can change their minds. It was the experts who ruined education in Britain with the discovery method and comprehensivisation, from the shackles of which the Labour party is now freeing itself.

What worries me about my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, for whom I have obvious respect, is that she spends so much time talking about the experts rather than the people at the bottom of the pile who know what it is like in their area. The same applies to the size of schools and hospitals. Schools have now returned to their previous sizes. I have always said that in 10 years' time the present fashion will change, and change will be necessary.

Consultation has been mentioned. There has been no real consultation with the man and woman in the street, although various semi-quango committees have given their opinions. Perhaps ordinary people should have written letters, gathered in the streets or marched. In any event, the lack of consultation with them has made the position more difficult.

I have been re-reading some of what has been said about elective dictatorship. A Parliament is elected for five years; a large number of us are members of the Government, and a certain number are parliamentary private secretaries. They are all very good people; I am surrounded by them, so I am living dangerously. The Executive, however, has taken over Parliament, and it has become more difficult to ask whether the system is working and whether it is possible to do things in a certain way.

Between 1986 and 1990, Edgware's accident and emergency department was rebuilt; three years later, its future was threatened and it began to be run down. It seems that, if we live long enough, we are bound to be in fashion at some point.

Leadership means convincing our constituents that we are acting in accordance with their best interests. I accept that that is difficult when it comes to the health service. Last week, the mayors of our three boroughs came to the House. They were seen not by the Secretary of State or the Minister of State, but by the Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, West (Mr. Sackville). Bolton must be a good place; certainly the football has not been too bad this year. What the mayors reported to the council, however, did not make the council feel very confident that its views had been properly represented. Some higher contact would have been useful.

Another problem is travel. It takes 45 minutes to travel from Edgware to Northwick Park on the 83 bus, and it costs 80p; it costs about £1.20 to travel to Barnet, and the journey can take up to an hour and a quarter. By that time, a person could be dead. As for ambulances, we do not know when they will arrive—and how fast they can move through the street: in many instances, they can move no faster than a bus. If an ambulance is stuck behind a bus for 10 minutes, there may be another two fatalities in that time.

A letter that I received this week from a rabbi in my constituency shows the level of concern. He wrote that the closure of Edgware general hospital would

"not only put at risk the lives of my own members, but also of all the residents of Brent . . . I therefore earnestly request that you make known our concerns at the highest levels. It seems totally criminal that the Government is determined to effect their policies, without any regard for the welfare of the population."

That is the feeling not just of the rabbi and his congregation, but of many people in the area. If we are to get things right, a good deal of public relations and change will be necessary in Edgware and elsewhere. I hope that the Department will see to that in the morning, and will consider what we can do in Edgware to set people's minds at rest.

In the current circumstances, I cannot support the Government tonight. It gives me no pleasure to say that, but we are debating a major issue, and I speak on behalf of my constituents. I hope that there will be further discussions in the long term, which will reassure both them and me.

7.4 pm

**Mr. Nigel Spearing** (Newham, South): I have probably discussed the Black Paper of the right hon. Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) with him for as long as 30 years. I believe that he would be a much better author of a White Paper on health than the Secretary of State.

I wish, however, to return to the point made by the right hon. Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke). Exactly six weeks ago, he, my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) and I attended on the Secretary of State to beg for a different decision on east London. I think that the right

*[Mr. Nigel Spearing]*

hon. Gentleman struck the right note: in this debate, constituency interest has properly overridden older and, perhaps, more permanent loyalties.

I believe that the health service reflects—in the minds and hearts of the people of this country—the common faith shared by some hon. Members: the same faith that motivated St. Bartholomew. Some of us could deliver sermons about what has happened to saints in the past—and, indeed, to the originator of our faith. We might draw parallels with what is happening to St Bartholomew's hospital.

I do not think that the Secretary of State understands what she is about. I try not to say anything about people that I am not willing to say to their faces. Some time ago, when the right hon. Lady was struggling to give answers to questions on a statement, a benign Opposition voice shouted, "Come on Virginia, you can do better than that." "Oh no, she can't," someone said. I am afraid that that is true of the right hon. Lady's performance.

The Government amendment refers to benefits to be gained from "new and better services". That may apply to some services, but far more are worsening and diminishing. Newham general hospital has only seven posts of an establishment of 11 in its accident and emergency department. In the past few weeks I have learnt that it is not a requirement of the Royal College of Surgeons for qualified surgeons seeking membership to serve in such departments. I learned that from a parliamentary answer given by the Minister of State. What on earth has the Secretary of State done about it? Surely the Royal College of Surgeons recognises that such service is a national duty—but, if it does not, the right hon. Lady should have advertised the fact, and perhaps changed the policy of the college.

The Secretary of State's plans consist entirely of projections—the projections of Tomlinson, the King's fund and so forth. We have heard a great deal about her projections in regard to the ambulance service. I have said time and again that they were inadequate and that the Secretary of State had got it wrong; I have been told, "Oh no, it is all right. We have the funds." After five or six years, an extra £14 million had to be injected into a service that is nowhere near as complicated as the health service as a whole. If the right hon. Lady and her colleagues have got it wrong in regard to the ambulance service—and they have, to the tune of £14 million—how can we expect them to get it right in regard to beds in London? I do not believe that we can.

On 26 April, I secured a half-hour debate in which I made various accusations about what was going on. The Minister was good enough to write to me and did not deny some of the points that I made. I mentioned Homerton hospital. Despite the warnings, the right hon. Lady has lauded it to the skies when clearly it is not adequate for the task.

In her speech, the right hon. Lady mentioned the London chest hospital. I agree with her. Why should people come from Plymouth to be treated at the London chest hospital, which deals with respiratory diseases—a problem that is on the upturn in London, particularly among children? They should not have to do so, but people from Petticoat lane will not be treated there, because the hospital is being closed. The Minister cannot deny that fact.

Nor can the Minister deny the fact that a teenager desperately in need of psychiatric assistance had to be put in a police cell in Newham because secure accommodation was not available, and that 250,000 people in the borough of Newham had one psychiatrist in post a week or so ago. For all I know, that position continues today. The right hon. Lady, those who advise her and those who support her have no grip of what is really going on.

I refer now to the speech of the right hon. and learned Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor). A deeper malaise has yet to be identified. Surely within the organisation of the health service, a number of vicious, declining spirals exist. Units, trusts, authorities—all of them have had their marching orders. Because of that, they are unable to co-ordinate together.

Health provision is not a business. Sainsbury's and Boots provide only what they wish to provide, unless they prescribe medicine. They take goods, cut them up, put them on the shelf, freeze, process and transport them. There is a willing buyer and a willing seller—that is the market. But each of us is unique in our health requirements. Health provision is a service, not a business, and in their White Paper entitled "Working for Patients" the Government have tried to turn what was essentially a service into a business.

Last Monday, I could not rejoice. The post-war period was one of consensus. I know that party differences existed, but for nearly 40 years from about 1950 to about 1990 a consensus existed among the people of this country and in the House about the national health service. I hope that we get it back because it has been shattered, as have other services. The health service especially affects the needs of the elderly and of women.

I could not rejoice last Monday because we have lost the unity for which those who died and those who risked their lives strove. We have lost it in the House. I hope that we can get it back, that the debate will enable us to do so and that many Conservative Members who share something of that vision will decline to support the Government in the Lobby tonight.

7.12 pm

**Mrs. Marion Roe** (Broxbourne): As Chairman of the Select Committee on Health, I should first like to inform the House of what the Committee has been doing in connection with London's health service. Its members have not only conducted an inquiry into London's ambulance service and prepared a report, which is about to be published, but kept a watching brief on the implementation of the proposals in the Tomlinson report. We have taken oral evidence from Sir Bernard Tomlinson and his team, the Secretary of State for Health, Department of Health officials, Sir Tim Chessells, the former chairman of the London Implementation Group, and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport when he was Minister for Health.

As our evidence-taking sessions are in public and frequently televised, we believe that the questioning of our witnesses provides the opportunity for greater understanding of the issues, both inside and outside Parliament. We shall interview my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health tomorrow afternoon, when

no doubt my colleagues will probe for further clarification and information on the controversial matter of London's health services.

We have visited many London hospitals on fact-finding missions—Bart's, Guy's, St. Thomas's, Kings College, Charing Cross, Westminster and Chelsea, the Royal Marsden, Queen Elizabeth hospital for children and Hammersmith. This morning, we visited the Edgware and Barnet hospitals. We have arranged to visit London hospital and St. Mary's, Paddington within the next few weeks. You can therefore see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the future of the national health service in London has an important place in the programme of the Committee, and we shall give it the focus that it deserves in the future.

As a Member of Parliament for a constituency in Hertfordshire, I am acutely aware of the reasons why so many reports have been commissioned on the future of London's hospitals—20 in all. Immediately before the war, the resident population of Greater London was nearly 9 million; today it is 6.9 million. Londoners have moved out of the capital to new towns, the home counties and beyond. It was deliberate Government policy to encourage a shift in the population out of inner-city areas.

I know from personal experience that those former Londoners now wish to receive high-quality health care where they live today, not where they and their families used to live. They do not wish to travel considerable distances into London for hospital services that are more expensive and less convenient than local services.

It has always been a bone of contention in Hertfordshire that, over many years, the NHS funding available through the regional health authority was being drawn into London, and that our area was underfunded as a result. In truth, there has been resentment that London's hospitals have taken more than their fair share in the allocation of resources. I make that point because I fear that that important aspect of the debate is frequently forgotten or ignored.

So often we hear only of complaint, accusations of failure and gloom and doom in relation to London's health services, yet some outstanding successes should be recognised—for example, St. Mary's NHS trust, covering St. Mary's hospital, Paddington. The trust has achieved a balanced budget for four years in succession. It has treated 57,023 patients in 1994-95—an increase of 2 per cent. on the previous year. It has cut the average waiting time for an operation to four months. It treated 8 per cent. more people as in-patients and day-care cases in 1994-95 compared with 1992-93. It has treated 40 per cent. more cardiac patients since 1992-93. It has taken 40 per cent. more kidney failure patients on to its end-stage renal failure programme, including dialysis and kidney transplant, since 1992-93. It has treated 15 per cent. more people in accident and emergency in 1994-95 compared with 1992-93. There has also been a 20 per cent. increase in ophthalmic accident and emergency cases. It has cut by 10 per cent. the number of non-clinical managers, although many are clinically qualified. It has appointed a woman chief executive, who was formerly the hospital's chief nurse.

The trust has introduced a number of successful innovative services at St. Mary's. For example, as one of the first hospitals in the United Kingdom to establish a general practitioner's service located in the A and E department, St. Mary's is committed to the increased effectiveness of that model of care. I am sure that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will understand that a mobile local population, many of whom are not registered with a GP, can gain access to appropriate primary care, and that GPs and hospitals benefit from increased co-operation and understanding.

St. Mary's has developed a number of new services provided on an out-patient basis and designed according to the needs of patients and their GPs. The new one-stop breast care service allows GPs to refer patients with palpable lumps to a clinic where they will be seen within a week. The multi-disciplinary approach incorporates a consultant cytologist, a consultant radiologist, a specialist breast surgeon, an oncologist and a specially trained breast care nurse specialist. It is designed so that patients are supported through the necessary steps to determine their condition. Tests are performed on the same day so that concerned patients can be reassured or treated as quickly as possible.

St. Mary's has undertaken a successful pilot to make pathology test results available immediately to GPs in the surgery. Using simple technology and incorporating existing equipment, an effective link has been tried and tested. That system will result in NHS savings where the need for duplicate tests by a hospital doctor and GP will be removed.

Cited frequently as a blueprint for other units, the minor injuries unit at St. Charles' hospital, which opened in 1993, is one of the first of its type. One thousand patients per month have used the new nurse-led unit, which offers quick and effective care.

St. Mary's has developed an innovative policy of integrated care pathways for individual patients, which ensures that patients can be discharged as soon as their condition allows and with a high level of follow-up care and treatment. A discharge planning group, which reviews and changes practices both within the hospital and in social services, has reduced lost bed days dramatically during the past two years. Not only does that benefit patients: it increases the number of beds available for new cases.

Patients are brought from across the United Kingdom, often using an air ambulance, to the very specialist paediatric intensive care unit at St. Mary's. The trust continues to pioneer care for very sick children and it commands an international reputation for excellence. It has demonstrated its commitment to that specialist service by investing to increase to six the number of PICU beds during 1995-96.

St. Mary's is a centre of excellence for the provision of care to cardiology patients and those requiring cardiac surgery. About 1,000 cardiac cases will undergo surgery during 1995-96 and they will receive a service among the best in the world. Patients wait an average of just two months for surgery. Care is patient focused, including a pre-admission visit where patients and their carers or family watch a video, meet nursing and medical staff and have an opportunity to share their concerns in a familiar and supportive environment. Surgery is followed through with a rehabilitation support group.

The trust has taken steps to increase the number of ophthalmology patients treated effectively on a day-care basis at the Western eye hospital. A newly formed department using highly trained, existing hospital staff to provide answers, advice and support to patients, visitors, carers, family, friends, general practitioners and

*[Mrs. Marion Roe]*

purchasers has been set up. It includes a free phone care line. In addition, the trust has even managed to pay the nurses' pay award in full.

I believe that hospitals that achieve should be rewarded. It can be bad for morale when hospitals that seem to be profligate or inefficient are apparently rewarded with additional cash and support, while those that demonstrate tough management are not. When doctors and nurses make sacrifices and change working practices, their efforts should be recognised. We seem to hear not much good news about health services in the capital, but there are hospitals that have not only embraced the health reforms but have actually proved that they can and do work to the benefit of patients.

My Committee and I look forward to welcoming my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State before us tomorrow so that this debate can be further explored.

7.22 pm

**Mr. Jeremy Corbyn** (Islington, North): The reality of life in London is that there is a long and frustrating wait for operations that involves great pain, causes stress to immediate family and friends, and means the loss of very many working days. The waiting list in London now totals more than 180,000. The health service in London simply is not working. The staff are strained to the point of breaking, while those desperate for an operation cannot get one.

The information provided throughout this debate and the numerous inquiries into London's health service leads to one inescapable conclusion—that the experience of most Londoners is of constant closures, threats and a decline in the local health service and the ability to obtain treatment from it.

Professor Jarman, who has frequently challenged both Government statistics and the Tomlinson inquiry, has provided information showing that 7,000 beds were closed between 1982 and 1990. More than 3,200 have been closed since 1990. In 1982, London health districts had 26,000 acute hospital beds; there are now only 17,000, with plans to close even more. The number of long-stay beds for the elderly has dropped to 6,000 and the number of psychiatric beds has been reduced by 3,000 over the past three years.

The list goes on and on—yet the Secretary of State heads blindly towards oblivion, telling us that somehow or other things are getting better, that it is all an Opposition plot, and that we exaggerate the problem. The problem is there, it is real and it is very serious.

The debate has been presented as though there is some competition between London and the rest of the country. There is nothing of the kind. We are not discussing the centres of excellence, the specialties or the fact that people have to travel to London for such treatment; we are discussing ordinary people with ordinary illnesses who need good hospitals. Those hospitals are constantly threatened with closure.

We must recognise that in London, as in the rest of the country, no real planning is taking place in the health service. It is impossible to plan if the health service is run by the pressures of an internal market economy, where the buck is passed from the Secretary of State to her junior Ministers, to the district health authorities, to the health service trusts and then back to the Department. The merry-go-round goes round and round. The London group of Labour Members recently interviewed the two regional chairs, but all they told us was that they were sending things back to the districts. Nobody takes responsibility.

When questions are asked of the Secretary of State, we are told that apparently no figures are kept centrally on anything any more. We are told to write to our health authorities, but they tell us to get in touch with the Secretary of State. They think that it is easier for us to meet her than it is for them to do so. Unfortunately, they have rather serious illusions about the power of parliamentarians.

The closures that we are debating this evening are tragic beyond belief. Many of my constituents in Islington, North and those of my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) use, love and cherish Bart's hospital—not just because it is 800 years old, not just because of its traditions and excellence, but because it provides a good service. The closure of Bart's is a monstrous act of vandalism. There is no other way to describe it. The same is true of other hospital closures.

The knock-on effect of the closure of Bart's is enormous. It has already been felt in casualty units, and in the waiting lists that are developing elsewhere. The same is true with the closure of Guy's, Edgware and the Brook. The closures are wrong, they are not necessary, and they do not even save money. Indeed, the cost of closure is far greater than any potential savings.

In previous debates, I have referred to hospital closures in my borough—for example, the Royal Northern hospital. Before I was elected to this place, there was a huge campaign to defend that hospital's casualty unit. One of the first pieces of correspondence I received as a new Member of Parliament in 1983 was from the then Minister, the hon. Member for Reading, East (Sir G. Vaughan), saying that the Government were withdrawing their previous undertaking to maintain the Royal Northern, and that it would be closed. The hospital has been closed, and the site sold for property development. It has not even been sold for social development.

There were pleas from the Islington Pensioners Forum and many other people to provide nurse-managed beds at the Royal Northern. Indeed, I raised the matter with the Minister during one of our previous debates. Nevertheless, the concerns and the demand were brushed aside, the hospital closed and the site sold to the highest bidder. Of course, highest bidders are those who can afford to speculate with their money on property development; they are not elderly people who need somewhere with nurse-managed beds where they can recuperate from treatment. The opportunity to provide that service has now been lost.

We need to consider the problems facing the emergency service. I wrote to the Minister on 21 March requesting a meeting after cancer patients had been turned away from the Whittington hospital because the emergency service had taken over several wards at that hospital following the closure of Bart's, which had forced patients to look to the emergency service. The casualty unit is working at more than 100 per cent. capacity.

One morning recently, 16 people were waiting on trolleys to be treated—but there was even a waiting list to get on a trolley. Some nine people had to wait for a trolley even before they had to wait to be treated.

The Government always say that the alternative to overcrowding and to the pressure on hospitals is to develop primary care facilities. It is not either/or—we need hospital facilities and primary care facilities. We need more GPs, better GP facilities, better primary care and far better health education. We also need to understand some of the causes of people becoming ill, such as the number of homeless, unemployed or very poor people in London.

I speak proudly as a member of Unison, and I think that we must look at the work that is done by the staff in hospitals. Morale in hospitals is at breaking point. Ancillary staff and manual workers are earning less in cash terms than they were many years ago, and their jobs are put up for sale to the lowest bidder every so often as the contractors try to move in and take over their jobs.

One has to wonder who is running the health service, and in whose interests it is being run. An attempt has been made by the Secretary of State to break up national pay bargaining, and to tell local hospitals that they must fund 2 per cent. of the 3 per cent. nurses' pay rise. What is going on is simply wrong. We must look ahead.

The Secretary of State says that the Labour party has no policies on the matter. I shall tell her straight—we have a lot of policies on health. First, we must address the democratic deficit in the running of the health service in London. No one knows who the members of the district health authorities are. They are faceless people, who are carrying out the Government's policies. We need a democratic, Londonwide health authority, and the necessary planning which goes into that.

We must also look at the poverty which people in London face. One of the most interesting documents I have read recently was the chief medical officer for health's report on Camden and Islington. The report showed that the borough's mortality rate was 25 per cent. above the national average, and that the borough had higher rates of infant mortality, drug abuse and homelessness. That is not unusual to my borough, and it can be replicated in borough after borough across London. We need some understanding of the causes of ill health in London, which are in part the environment and in part poverty. The health service in London must be able to meet those needs.

I conclude by referring to a letter which I received from the Islington Pensioners Forum, which I believe was sent to many inner London Members of Parliament. The secretary of the organisation, Angela Sinclair, said:

"The pensioners have paid for the NHS through national health insurance all their working lives, and that they depend on it in their old age. They feel bitterly let down when chunks of the family silver are sold off."

That is a plea to keep Bart's and the other hospitals open, and to develop a health service in London that we can be proud of and upon which we will be able to rely.

7.31 pm

**Sir John Gorst** (Hendon, North): I acknowledge the need for reform, and there can be no doubt that it is necessary. But it must be done with flexibility, not rigidity. It is a difficult problem, and one might say that what is important is not so much what one does, but how one does it.

I do not overlook the importance of preserving the national monuments—the hospitals such as Guy's and Bart's. They have been described as international centres of excellence, but I personally regard them as medical cathedrals, because they attract talent from all over the world. Other hon. Members—particularly my right hon. Friend the Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke)—are greater experts on Guy's.

I will concentrate my remarks on the accident and emergency department in Edgware general hospital in my constituency. I would like to confine my remarks to amplifying four points which I made on 5 April, to which the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) referred.

When my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State answered questions on the London closures, I said that closing Edgware hospital was

"doing the wrong thing, in the wrong way, at the wrong time and in the wrong place".—[*Official Report*, 5 April 1995; Vol. 257, c. 1738.]

At the outset, I shall make one concession—if that is the right word—to the Government. I recognise that they have addressed themselves belatedly to both the timing and the manner of the closures. They were important considerations, but they were not relevant to the central issues. Of course it was never right to scrap an accident and emergency department until something was up and running in its place. I welcome the Government's willingness to correct that. But we must recognise that that is a palliative, or perhaps I might say a sedative. It is not a concession.

However much of a delay there may be before the closure takes place, regardless of the improvements in ambulance performances, and taking into full account the expanded capacity at alternative hospitals, the very distance and remoteness of those hospitals remains an obstacle to people living in Edgware. In short, we are left with an insuperable argument against closure. The measures are being taken in the wrong place, and will affect the wrong people. That is why 40,000 petitioners have united with one voice against the proposals.

I have repeatedly tried to point out to my right hon. Friend that Edgware general hospital has certain unique features. I have pleaded and argued for 18 months behind closed doors that those features should be recognised. As we are now discussing the matter publicly, I may regret those discussions, but I make no apologies.

Edgware general hospital serves an area with special social problems, and that is why the outcry has been so loud and so angry, and may perhaps be so prolonged. People on low incomes live within walking distance of the hospital, as do a large proportion of elderly and disabled people, many of whom are housed in purpose-built accommodation because of their disabilities. A significant number of refugee immigrants from troubled parts of Africa, with their attendant health and language problems, are also housed near the hospital.

To force those hard-pressed citizens—few of whom have their own transport—to struggle to find medical attention in an emergency not a few steps away from their doors but up to an hour away is a blind and, in my view, insensitive form of planning. After all the Government's palliatives, postponements and assurances, people on low incomes and elderly people will still be living there, and onerous travel will still be something that they have to

*[Sir John Gorst]*

face. As there have been no meaningful concessions by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, I shall be voting against the Government tonight.

I am not impressed by the emollient Government amendments, which are couched in what I must describe as blandly seductive language. Beyond the confines of Westminster, the niceties of who tabled what, and whether the amendments were expressed in harsh or moderate terms, is immaterial. Through the media, everyone knows that the vote tonight is about whether certain hospital facilities will be closed or kept open. My vote will be for the latter. The provenance of the motion is of secondary importance to the achievement of the objective.

The debate is significant in two respects. First, are the Government going to prove to everyone that they really mean what they say about listening to people at the grass roots? In the case of Edgware, that means listening to what 40,000 petitioners have been asking for.

Secondly, we in this House must be responsive to something more than cost-efficiency and clinical factors. We must acknowledge the weight that must be accorded to ordinary people's fears, desires, prejudices and conveniences. We are their servants, not their masters. Through their taxes, they pay the bill for what we run up on their behalf. The demands of those who elect us may outstrip the economies which Ministers' deskbound advisers think prudent. Obviously, Ministers must heed such cautious advice as they receive but, in the final analysis, they must also balance and reconcile it with what ordinary people want.

I therefore end my speech with this observation: human beings, not balance sheets, come first.

7.39 pm

**Ms Margaret Hodge** (Barking): For every London Member, today's debate is of critical importance. The blinkered destruction of the national health service in the capital, driven by dogma and devoid of common sense, will leave the people of our capital not with a first-rate health service fit for the 21st century, as the Government proclaim, but with a second-rate two-tier service, where money means more than lives, and where flashy computers are valued more highly than the Dr. Kildares of the past.

Like others, I listened to the Secretary of State on the radio yesterday morning when she talked enthusiastically about how the changes in London's health services have been driven by the needs of technology. The Opposition have called this debate because we want a health service that is driven by the needs of the people. That is the fundamental principle on which the health service was founded almost half a century ago, and we reaffirm that principle today. Technology should be the servant of humanity, not its master.

What do the Government's proposals mean to ordinary people? I am currently dealing with three tragic deaths in my constituency, which, on the face of it, could have been avoided had the health service not been ravaged and fragmented. That is shocking. I am just one Member of Parliament; I do not know how representative my caseload is, but never a surgery goes by without three or four people coming to see me with yet more desperate stories of delays and incompetence in the local health service in dealing with their health needs.

At its most devastating, there are the deaths. In January this year, a constituent, Maria Ayling, died tragically at her home in Barking. She was only 20, and she died of a deep-vein thrombosis in her leg. She had been desperately trying to get into hospital for nearly two months before she died. Had she been seen and properly diagnosed, her untimely death could have been avoided.

Last Friday, I met the chief executive of Redbridge Healthcare, along with Maria's father and his solicitor. The day after Maria died, a letter arrived from the hospital giving her an appointment. It is not just the hospital that is to blame in this case; what the chief executive said about that letter says it all about the state of our national health service.

Maria was given the appointment not because the hospital had finally realised that she needed urgent medical care, but because the purchasing authority had unexpectedly released more money so that more people could be seen and new appointments made. That appointment came too late for Maria. What an indictment. That tragic case well illustrates the current state of the health service in London. It is always worth while reminding ourselves of the human reality that lies behind the statistics, which is what the Government fail to do.

Tonight, the focus is on north London, but what is happening in north London is also happening in east London. It is a national scandal that the Government determine their programme of hospital closures on the basis of simply buying another Tory Member's vote and thus buying another discredited day in government. That is Tory decibel planning at its worst. It is not just the closure of the A and E services at Edgware that matter, but the closure of A and E departments across the capital. If it is wrong for one constituency, it is wrong throughout the capital, and all hon. Member have a duty to their constituents to vote with us tonight.

My constituency has no hospital. The Government closed Barking hospital, despite a vigorous campaign led by my predecessor, Jo Richardson. The borough of Barking and Dagenham has no hospital, as the other hospital was also closed by the Government, and soon we shall lose our next nearest hospital, Oldchurch.

Despite universal condemnation, Ministers have decided to go ahead with the closure of the A and E department at Oldchurch. Hon. Members on both sides of the House, including the hon. Members for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) and for Romford (Sir M. Neubert), have said that they oppose that proposed closure. If they mean it, they will vote with us to-night. If they do not, their constituents will know that they are not prepared to defend the national health service in their areas.

Closing accident and emergency departments is the most disastrous and dishonest way for the Government to proceed. If the A and E department of any hospital is closed, that hospital is condemned to a slow and painful death. Most admissions come through the A and E route; if those admissions are stopped, under the rigidities of the market, unit costs will increase, and the hospital will price itself out of existence and be forced to close. The Government do not even have the guts to tell us the truth

When they close the A and E department at Oldchurch, Bart's or Edgware, they are passing the death sentence on those well-loved and much-needed hospitals.

"But ah!" the Secretary of State will say. "We're opening minor injuries units to serve local communities." Those are another con. The minor injuries units will not even be able to set a broken leg. If all they can do is stitch cuts, that service should be provided by GPs in modern surgeries, and it is no substitute for an emergency unit.

If the vote of hon. Members from north London has been bought by the promise of a minor injuries unit, they have been conned. The units will do nothing for those who need an emergency service. They will still have to travel much further; they will still be dependent on the inadequacies of the London ambulance service; and they will still be transported far from their homes and families, as doctors desperately hunt for an empty bed. Primary health facilities are simply not in place to take over the burden created by the closure of hospitals.

Let us look at the reality facing real people in real communities like mine in Barking. "Don't worry about losing Oldchurch," we are told. "There's always Newham, Harold Wood and King George's." This morning, I rang those hospitals to establish whether, on their most recent figures, they could cope. As we know, and as the Secretary of State persistently refuses to acknowledge, they could not cope on the Minister's guidelines for an acceptable occupancy level.

Newham hospital told me that its occupancy level is over 100 per cent. It had to open 46 extra emergency beds to cope with the pressure from Homerton, which could not cope with the pressure caused by the closure of Bart's. Havering hospitals are running at nearly 96 per cent. occupancy and, on Friday, King George's was running at 93 per cent. occupancy.

The knock-on effect of other closures in that chaotic and fragmented market will add pressure on those hospitals. For example, closing Bart's will mean added pressure on the London hospital, which will therefore have to push people towards Newham hospital from the west, while we add pressure on Newham from the east with the closure at Oldchurch.

**Mr. Andrew Mackinlay** (Thurrock): Will my hon. Friend give way?

**Ms Hodge:** No, I do not have time.

Opposition Members do not deny the need for change in the pattern of health services in London. What we oppose is the headlong rush for change being pursued with such zealousness by the Secretary of State. There are simply not enough beds, and there is a critical and urgent need to stop, think and listen, before the Government destroy what we all value. Our plea to every hon. Member, and particularly to the Secretary of State, is this: take the medicine of listening; swallow hard, and do the right thing—and withdraw the inept, penny-pinching proposals to close yet more hospitals.

7.48 pm

**Mr. Richard Tracey** (Surbiton): I have been involved in public life in London for a good many years now and I am pleased to speak in this important and serious debate. The subject has engendered a great deal of discussion in this Chamber and other parts of the House for a long time between my colleagues and me and the Secretary of State and her junior Ministers, so there has been no lack of serious discussion of the points behind it.

In studying the history of health discussion in this place, it is interesting to note tha. the subject of London health and London hospitals has been turned over for at least 100 years. There is on record a report on the subject from a Select Committee of the other place in 1892. As the Government's amendment to the motion on the Order Paper says, the discussion has been going on seriously for 80 years. In a recent letter to *The Times*, Lord Annan recollects very serious discussion going on for 30 years.

The fact which repeatedly emerges from accounts of that debate is that on all occasions there has been a strong argument for changing the pattern of health treatment in London—the hospitals and the primary care of our people. In an account that I have read in the past few days, a professor at the university of York who studied the subject concludes:

"the ... problems ... have remained largely unresolved for lack of political courage."

Unfortunately, that message has been expressed to me many times by people who, although they may not be so passionately involved in the subject as hon. Members on both sides of the House naturally are, nevertheless realise that there has been a fundamental change in the population patterns in our capital city and in the various needs for treatment.

Unquestionably, the London hospital pattern suited the needs of the past. The large hospitals in central London were set up many years ago to treat serious ailments on behalf of the country. That is no longer the position. As many colleagues have said earlier, people now want to be treated closer to their homes and progress in the technology of surgery and in the technology of treating ailments has made that possible. That is at the root of the Government's health reform policies.

Tonight we are discussing the pattern of health care in London, and we must concentrate on that, especially those of us who are London Members, but we must also heed the cries of colleagues on both sides of the House—most of whom, admittedly, are Conservative Members—for resources to flow out of London to their constituents, who previously may well have been transported to central London to be treated at Bart's or Guy's or St. Thomas's or any of the other great hospitals.

**Mr. Mackinlay:** The Government are even closing accident and emergency departments outside London.

**Mr. Tracey:** There has been a change, as I said, in the pattern of treatment.

I do not believe that any Members of the House have sufficient knowledge to disagree with the President of the Royal College of Surgeons or the President of the Royal College of Physicians. They are on record as saying that, because there are now methods of day surgery, methods of cold surgery and various other forms of treatment for many ailments, allowing patients to be treated quickly so that they may leave hospital and return to their homes, we no longer need the vast number of acute beds that were previously required.

Therefore, conclusions have been drawn, in all the studies commissioned by the Government, including the one by Sir Bernard Tomlinson—backed up, incidentally, by Professor Jarman, who has been quoted by Opposition

*[Mr. Tracey]*

Members—that the pattern of surgery is changing and there may not be so great a need for acute beds as there once was.

The hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) made a sedentary intervention about accident and emergency departments. A wealth of study and research—carried out not only in this country but in other parts of the world, in war zones and in other large conurbations on the other side of the Atlantic and so on—shows that the pattern of accident and emergency treatment is no longer the same as might once have been considered necessary.

A fact which emerges from those studies is that one of the most important aspects is to bring paramedic treatment to the scene of an accident as soon as possible. Studies undertaken in the United States of America show that, when paramedics reach the scene quickly, with properly equipped ambulances—in London, paramedics do not necessarily need ambulances because there are high-powered motor cycles to take them to the scene of the accident—the treatment they administer at the scene can do a great deal more to help save a life or prevent serious injury and its consequences for those unfortunate people than simply sending an ambulance and rushing them to hospital as soon as possible.

The evidence is there. Documentation is in the Department of Health—I believe that it has also been deposited in the Library—showing that accident and emergency treatment of that newly researched type is more successful than maintaining a proliferation of A and E departments in every hospital throughout the capital.

The Government have suggested to my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) and my hon. Friends the Members for Hendon, North (Sir J. Gorst), for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) and for Finchley (Mr. Booth), that the proposals for the hospitals in their constituencies may well solve many of the problems that they have rightly drawn to the attention of the Secretary of State. Obviously, that is a problem for them to resolve, and I have every sympathy with them in trying to resolve it in the best possible way for their constituents.

The hospital which treats my constituents and those of my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont) is Kingston hospital, which has grown in stature and expertise in the past few years. There has been considerable investment in the maternity unit—£7.5 million in recent times—which is much welcomed by local people. A sum of £1.5 million has also been spent on the Royal Eye hospital unit in Kingston hospital. As part of the reforms, there have also been considerable improvements in primary care in our part of south-west London. Ninety-four per cent. of the population of the Kingston and Richmond health authority are now treated by general practitioners who are fundholders. We have the largest percentage of fundholders, who have accepted that important advance in health care, in our part of London.

The reforms must progress. They should be pursued with resolve by the Secretary of State, and thereby the health of London will be considerably improved.

7.58 pm

**Ms Glenda Jackson** (Hampstead and Highgate): The hon. Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey) suggested that his constituents wish to be treated near where they live. That is also true for people who live in inner and outer London boroughs. They, too, wish to be treated near where they live.

I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Hendon, North (Sir J. Gorst), who was an example to every Member of the House in the way in which he defended so honestly and openly the interests of his constituents and, I thought, even more, the interests of some of his most vulnerable constituents.

That is true for all of us, because we are attempting to defend people who, in many instances, are suffering from illnesses that they do not understand or are recovering from accidents which, by their very nature, came upon them when they were unprepared. To exacerbate those people's concerns by possibly making them travel for treatment to an area that they do not know, which makes it difficult for relatives to visit them to offer comfort as they recover, acts against the basic tenets of medicine and health care.

The hon. Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe), in her guise as Chairman of the Select Committee on Health, gave us a comprehensive list of the London hospitals that she intends to visit and listed the witnesses from whom the Select Committee intends to take evidence. I hope that the Select Committee will also find time to take evidence from a constituent who earlier today submitted a green card asking to meet me. When I went out to Central Lobby, she told me of her grave concern about the outcome of the debate. She works in the cancer department at Bart's hospital and I am afraid that I could not reassure her that the outcome of the debate would be that Bart's will continue to flourish and to serve people as it has done for 800 years. She is a dedicated worker in the national health service and she told me that what is happening within the NHS in London is "a disgrace", to use her words. She cited instances where people suffering from cancer have had to wait more than four weeks even for an appointment, let alone any kind of treatment.

I regret that my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) is not in his place, as he made a salient point about the availability of health care, which impacts on all hon. Members who represent inner London constituencies. He said that there is obviously a need for primary health care in London, but an equal need for hospital health care. He argued that the health care provided for millions of Londoners at accident and emergency departments should continue to be offered until primary health care facilities are up and running.

As he said, it is not an either-or situation. Undoubtedly, it could end up as a neither-nor one, because many people in London—possibly hundreds of thousands—are not registered with any general practitioner. They look to the A and E departments of their local hospitals for treatment. If those departments are closed, some of the most vulnerable people in London will be left without any health care at all.

Various figures have been bandied today about the actual population of London. Some Conservative Members have argued that, since 1979, which seems to be a watershed for some of them, the London population has fallen. The hon. Member for Kensington (Mr.

Fishburn) made a valid point, however, when he said that the population of London is not just made up of those who are residents, but includes the vast influx every morning of those who work in our capital city. They, too, require health care and health services when they are in what could be deemed the city of London, even though they live outside it.

In the past few years, there has also been a great influx of people looking for work and for homes in London. In many cases they appear on no register or census. My constituency seems to have an increasing population of homeless men. In many cases their homelessness has been exacerbated by problems occasioned by drug and alcohol misuse. It is extremely difficult for them to obtain any kind of medical treatment unless they register with a GP. In many cases pride, foolish though it may be, prevents them from doing so. They can, however, use the facilities that are provided by A and E units.

My central concern undoubtedly rests with the hospitals in my constituency, the Royal Free and the Whittington. We hear about restructuring day by day—on occasions, it seems like hour by hour—including the closure of Bart's and the possible closure of the A and E department at Edgware. If such facilities are lost, the hospitals in my constituency will be expected to take up the slack. They will be expected to be able to provide services for the sick and those involved in accidents.

Camden and Islington health authority has been told by the Department of Health that, in the next five years, it must look to a reduction of £25 million in its budget. I have asked the Secretary of State directly where the money will come from to expand facilities, as will be necessary, at the Royal Free and at the Whittington and to pay for the additional staff, but answer comes there none.

I add my voice to those of other hon. Members who have urged the Secretary of State to call a halt to the seemingly mindless rush to change existing health care provision in London. As my hon. Friend the Member for Barking (Ms Hodge) has already said, we are talking about the treatment of patients—individual human beings. It is their needs that we attempt to serve through the NHS in London.

I regret that the Secretary of State is not in her place. Surely she can take on board what constituency Members from London hear day in and day out, not only from our constituents but from people who are daily at the sharp end of NHS delivery in London. They all say that there is something wrong with that service provision. Day in and day out, we hear that the NHS in London is under inhuman pressure and that, in many cases, it is beyond the point of restitution and is suffering from internal decay. We are told that it is failing to do that which it was set up to deliver and to which those people who have dedicated their lives to working in it are still committed: to make the ill well and to ease the suffering of those who, for whatever reason, are particularly vulnerable.

I urge the Secretary of State to listen. She has been asked by hon. Members on both sides of the House to listen to the people who know best—not just the patients who use the health service, but most definitely those people who provide that service.

8.7 pm

**Mr. Robert G. Hughes** (Harrow, West): The hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms Jackson) said that the health service was failing generally, but such characterisation is a great insult to the people who work in it. That has never been my experience of the health service when either I or my family have used it.

In the seven or so years in which I have been a Member of Parliament, I have seen improvements in NHS provision in my constituency. There are still some problems, which were highlighted today by the Opposition, but they have not offered us a shred of evidence that they have a policy to deal with those problems. One must warn the Labour party that shroud waving did it a disservice at the previous general election—it partly cost it that election—and that shroud waving does not win it any votes.

As we were told that this debate is a non-party political occasion—

**Mr. Mackinlay:** Eh?

**Mr. Hughes:** Yes, that is what we were told on the radio by the Opposition, who said that the debate was about the health service. Presumably that is why the leader of the Labour party did a photo-call at Bart's this morning and why the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) made such a highly political speech. I therefore thought that I would look back at the last debate on the health service when the Labour Government were in power.

On 15 March 1979, there was a debate in the House during which it was revealed that 600 hospitals were dealing only with emergencies, nine had closed completely and 5,500 beds were out of action. That did not cause cries of alarm at the time because that was an improvement on the situation when the House had last debated the subject the previous November. That is what the Labour party did to the health service when it was in government—it closed hospitals, reduced nurses' pay and cancelled the hospital building programme. Labour party members have no standing in this debate.

I came to the debate wondering on what evidence my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State had based her plans to allow the closure of the accident and emergency department at Edgware. The subject has been covered disgracefully by the *Evening Standard* and by other media outlets. I heard a journalist on London News Radio say, "Doubtless the Secretary of State will provide an argument for the closure, if there is one." That is a disgraceful way to approach the debate.

I tabled a question to my right hon. Friend asking for the scientific evidence upon which she had based her decision. I put that evidence before the right hon. Member for Derby, South and my questions clearly caught her on the hop. The fact that she had not examined the scientific evidence proved the emptiness of her arguments. I think that that is a disgraceful performance by a leading Labour party spokesperson.

The review of that evidence is available in the Library of the House of Commons—it is not hidden away—so the right hon. Lady and her colleagues may examine it if they can be bothered. It talks about the relationship between the size of accident and emergency departments and clinical outcomes. If we are talking about providing the best possible health service, we must talk about clinical outcomes. What happens when people use the accident and emergency facilities? All the evidence suggests that

*[Mr. Hughes]*

more lives will be saved in the future when the changes are implemented. I put that point to the right hon. Lady, but she did not seem to understand it.

In 1992, the North West Thames task force suggested that accident and emergency departments with fewer than 50,000 new patients per year did not have the necessary throughput for cost-effective care. It said that departments should have the capacity to deal with at least 50,000 new attendances per year as smaller departments are unable to employ experienced staff at night and at weekends. I argue that this matter does not revolve around financial considerations; we must examine what happens when A and E departments are concentrated in one area.

The results of a survey carried out in Orange county in the United States indicated a severe reduction in the number of deaths judged preventable. Labour Members may read about it in the "Archives of Surgery"—which I think is rather more authentic than Labour party briefing notes read by Labour Members. *[Interruption.]* Labour Members should listen to this, because it is important for their constituents as well as my own.

In a one-year experience, trauma care in Orange county California, where patients were taken to the closest hospital, was evaluated and compared with San Francisco county where all trauma victims were brought to a single, centrally-located trauma centre. The survey concluded that

"73 per cent. of the non-CNS deaths in Orange County might have been prevented if the patients had been taken directly to a trauma centre".

That idea is not restricted to the United States; nor is it anything new. The hon. Member for Barking (Ms Hodge) suggested that the measures were being rushed through. It was first suggested in 1961 that there could be an advantage in changing the accident and emergency arrangements. That suggestion has been ignored many times since then by many Secretaries of State and I pay enormous tribute to my right hon. Friend for having the political strength and courage to carry through the reforms.

Residents in Edgware will be no more than five or six miles from an A and E department. I appreciate the traffic problems in that part of London and I will turn to that issue in a moment. Some £60 million is being invested to upgrade the Barnet general hospital.

A scare story has been circulated in my constituency that that will put extra pressure on the Northwick Park hospital. That sounds reasonable on the face of it, but it is not true. As was said earlier in the debate, 30 new beds have been opened at Northwick Park hospital this year and it is planned to open another 60 beds next year. Admissions through the accident and emergency department currently total 13,000 and it will have the capacity to deal with 16,500 admissions in April 1997—the date of the proposed changes at Edgware hospital.

In addition, Northwick Park hospital will employ more staff and the hospital is about to engage a second consultant in the accident and emergency department so that it has the expertise to enable it to realise the scientific evidence which indicates that large, well-staffed A and E departments will save lives.

I agree with the remarks by my hon. Friend the Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey) about the lamentable record of the London ambulance service. The Pinner ambulance station in my constituency answers only 60 per cent. of calls within 14 minutes. Anyone who is familiar with the Harrow and Pinner area knows why that is so—the ambulances are concentrated on what must have been a very good site for that area many years ago, but it is no longer suitable. We need to disperse those ambulances. We need to implement some of the radical changes—I must explain it in shorthand because my time is brief—adopted by the Northumbria ambulance service.

It has made enormous improvements and I am sure that the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) would confirm that fact. It has a first-class ambulance service, which is measurably the best in the country. If it is good enough for Northumbria, it is certainly good enough for London. I hope that the ambulance service will introduce radical changes and use the extra money wisely. The service would benefit from employing paramedics on motor bikes who would get medical assistance and equipment to accident victims quickly.

8.17 pm

**Mr. Stephen Timms** (Newham, North-East): Six months ago, when we last debated the health service in London, I raised concerns about the future shape of community health services in east London. At that time deep anxiety was expressed about the proposal to have a single trust-run community health service for Newham, Tower Hamlets, Hackney and the City. I was delighted when the Government announced at the beginning of December that there would be three separate trusts, and I welcomed the Government's response to the points that were made during the debate.

We were anxious that there should be separate trusts in order to expose how much money was being spent in each of the three areas. Our suspicions about funding disparities were confirmed when advertisements for senior positions in each of the new trusts were published. The published budget for Newham per head of population was less than half of that for the rest of the area. That fact highlights the issue of health service funding in London upon which I shall concentrate my remarks this evening.

The Government's amendment to the Labour party's motion on the Order Paper

"commends the Government for its record in investing in . . . the long-term interest of . . . the people of London;"

That choice of words betrays a complacency which rings very hollow all over London. There is growing and compelling evidence, including work commissioned by the Government, that areas such as Newham are deeply under-resourced and yet are still being cut back further in the allocation of national resources.

Two weeks ago the King's Fund published a report, called for by the former Government chief medical officer, entitled, "Tackling Inequalities in Health". The report's conclusions were forthright and unequivocal. It says:

"People who live in disadvantaged circumstances have more illnesses, greater distress, more disability and shorter lives than those who are more affluent."

It continues:

"During the 1980s social divisions accelerated at a rate not matched for such a sustained period by any other rich industrialised country. Not surprisingly, the impact that this increase has had on health is now beginning to emerge. Death rates in some of the most

disadvantaged areas in Britain not only worsened in relative terms between 1981 and 1991 . . . but among some age groups, such as young men, the death rates actually rose."

That cannot be accepted as just an unfortunate fact of life. It must be addressed by those responsible for the health service.

The King's Fund report also says:

"The injustice could be prevented but it will require political will. The situation could be substantially improved if the political will existed to recognise that tackling inequalities in health is a fundamental requirement to social justice for all citizens. The question is: can British policy makers rise to the challenge?"

We cannot afford to ignore that challenge. The spiral of poor health and under-achievement cannot be allowed to continue. The social and economic costs as well as the moral responsibility will be borne by us all.

In October, the Centre for Health Economics at the University of York reported to the Government on the distribution of health resources. Its findings were unambiguous. It said:

"The current formula (introduced in the early 1990s) has resulted in a shift of resources away from the poorer and sicker areas."

The York report produced a new capitation formula which would yield a significant shift of resources to the inner cities.

Tragically, the Government's response has been to water down that report and we are now told that in my area of east London we are to lose out even further when the Government's adaptation of the formula is fully in place. We will lose out by £14 million in a budget of £322 million. The pattern is the same elsewhere in inner London. It is a travesty of the York report's recommendations and the figures show that the Government are moving in the opposite direction to that recommended by the York team.

There is a crisis in the health service in London. Departing general practitioners cannot be replaced. In our accident and emergency unit at Newham general hospital, only seven of 11 vacant posts could be filled in the last recruitment round. The work load for many health workers is far greater than would be tolerated in more prosperous areas. There is a shortage of children's nurses, and orthopaedic wards have to rely on agency staff.

I want to raise deep concerns about what has happened to the funding that has been earmarked for primary care improvements in east London. The Secretary of State made a great deal about the need to redirect resources into primary care. We all welcome improvements in primary care and there is no doubt that, by one means or another, the Government have made some funds available. What has become of that money? Where are the improvements that it is supposed to bring?

I have with me an astonishing document. It is the latest district audit management letter on the City and East London family health services authority—the body that is charged with the responsibility for overseeing the primary care improvements that the Government have promised in east London. Those improvements are, without doubt, desperately needed. The document talks about the affairs of the authority and it says:

"there have been clear failures to recognise that there are legal limits on the powers of the FHSA . . . there have been instances where officers have maintained unofficial bank accounts in respect of FHSA funds . . . little regard was given to recommendations at audit for improving the management and financial affairs of the authority."

Those serious allegations are documented in the report, which goes on to conclude that

"such failures have resulted in the consequent loss of scarce resources to health services in the area."

The document tells us that significant sums of money have been wasted.

I am aware that there have been personnel changes at that FHSA, but it has shown itself wholly unable to oversee the capital projects that the Government have required it to deliver and which the Government have promised to the people of east London.

The Star Lane medical centre in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) was allocated a grant of £1.9 million in the first year of the London implementation zone programme. Three years later there is no sign of a single brick being laid. I have tabled a parliamentary question asking where that money now resides.

This morning I received a letter from the Newham GP forum which says:

"We are at the bottom of a major recruitment crisis as well as suffering from rock bottom morale."

The root of the problem is a catalogue of projects involving GP premises which have gone catastrophically wrong. The letter lists five of them. About one project it says that, because of his experiences with the FHSA, the doctor

"is on the verge of a nervous breakdown and bankruptcy."

It says about another project:

"Despite this length of time and commitment no clear path has been agreed as to how these premises can be developed any further."

That "commitment" involved a dentist putting in £150,000 of his own money.

About the next project the letter says:

"there is a strong possibility that recently started building works will be stopped before completion because"

the doctor's bank has

"advised him that he has too much negative equity."

Another doctor secured a promise of £700,000 towards the cost of the premises from the London Docklands development corporation, subject to the work being started by 1 July this year. The letter states:

"there is no likelihood of any building works commencing before the deadline and as a result the whole project may have to be shelved."

The letter adds that if that happens the doctor has decided to leave his practice, and Newham.

That is a catalogue of appalling mismanagement. Far from improving primary health care in east London, it is literally wrecking it. Those charged with delivering the improvements have been wholly incapable of doing so. I call on the Secretary of State to make an urgent and thorough investigation of what has happened to the London implementation zone funding for east London, because I am increasingly worried that terrible damage has been done.

8.27 pm

**Mr. John Marshall** (Hendon, South): I have been amazed by some of the speeches in the debate. When my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State was speaking, some hon. Members from outside London were suggesting that the health service in London was somehow overfunded. I do not believe that that is true. For example, there is a 23 per cent. shortfall in psychiatric

*[Mr. John Marshall]*

beds in London. One has only to look at the performance of the London ambulance service, which, by common consent, is the worst in the country. If one looks also at the difficulties that sometimes affect the supply of intensive care beds in London, one recognises why people in London do not believe that the health service is overfunded.

For colleagues from outside London to talk as if the health service in London is overfunded does a disservice to the debate, because it is not true. It was true in the 1970s when the then Labour Government instituted the resource allocation working party formula, which affected resources in London in the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s. Now those resources have been removed. It is wrong for people to recycle the speaking notes that they have used for the past 20 years and assume that they are still accurate. I know that in politics it is a great temptation to do that, but we should not seek to follow it.

I heard one comment about Edgware, which suggested that the hon. Member concerned probably did not know either its geographical location or even how to spell it. He suggested that it might be in central London.

When the Secretary of State announced in a written answer that she had approved the closure of Edgware accident and emergency department, I subsequently made a number of points. I said that she was proposing a system of primary health care whereby most of the extra £15 million would be spent after the Edgware accident and emergency department was closed, which seemed unacceptable.

I am pleased to say that this afternoon the Secretary of State has come to the House and agreed to spend an additional £2 million—as I understand it, £1 million this year and £1 million next year—mainly in the western part of the London borough of Barnet, which includes a significant amount of my constituency. Obviously, it is difficult to be too beastly to a Secretary of State who has this afternoon given some money to my constituency.

However, I have a number of questions that I want to ask about the other four issues that I have raised with the Secretary of State. The first involves the London ambulance service. We are told that there will be two additional ambulance crews in the Edgware district. We are told that the London ambulance service will continue to be monitored against the patients charter standards. If the London ambulance service fails to meet those patients charter standards—

**Dr. Ian Twinn** (Edmonton): If it continues to fail to meet them.

**Mr. Marshall:** As my hon. Friend says, if it continues to fail to meet those patients charter standards, what will the Secretary of State do? Will further additional resources be put into Edgware? Will there be a radical reorganisation of the London ambulance service, or what?

I have raised the issue of transport links with the Secretary of State on a number of occasions. This afternoon she said that she was setting up a working party—50 per cent. of that working party is sitting on the Government Front Bench and the other 50 per cent. is to come from the Department of Transport.

Transport links between Edgware and Barnet are particularly poor. During the Easter recess, my hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet (Mr. Chapman) and I were due to meet the chairman of the Wellhouse trust at Barnet. We arrived on time at 2 pm. The chairman arrived at 2.15 pm and said that the trouble was that transport links between Edgware and Barnet were not what they should be. I understand that my hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mr. Booth) had a similar experience and was kept waiting even longer. The chairman was not trying to be discourteous or to prove a point, but the point was very well made. I am glad that the Secretary of State is setting up a working party.

We have a right to know when that working party will report. Will it report to the House? How will we hear what it decides? If it recommends significant expenditure, it might be open to the Secretary of State to reopen the issue of the closure of the accident and emergency department at Edgware because, if a lot of money is to be spent on roads, further questions must be asked.

We are told that the minor accident unit at Edgware will be opened as soon as possible—it will be opened in 1996 rather than 1997. That is of benefit, in that it will be up and running before any closure takes place. We have been told in a letter from the Secretary of State that there could be a general practitioner presence in the minor accident unit, which is currently expected to be solely a nurse-based unit. We should like to see that possibility fleshed out. We should like to know how likely it is that the unit will have a GP presence rather than just a nurse presence. That is an important question that must be answered, as the matter will clearly be of concern to us over a considerable period.

Everyone who knows me well knows that the past few weeks have been particularly painful. I think that even the Government Whips Office would accept that I am normally a loyal Government supporter. I have rebelled only twice: once over the social security reforms in 1988—

**Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman:** Twice?

**Mr. Marshall:** I should remind my hon. Friend that the Government changed their mind within 10 days of my rebellion, so I was right. I rebelled for a second time in 1989 over the Football Spectators Bill and again I was right as the Government tore up the Bill, so I shall not take any lessons from my hon. Friend about when I should and should not rebel. I accept that, in the role that I have held for some time of parliamentary private secretary to one of the most decent and nicest men, I have had obligations.

I hope that never again will announcements about Edgware hospital be made by way of written replies on the day before Adjournment debates on the future of that hospital. Such a procedure was discourteous to my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes), who instituted the debate.

I believe that this will not be the end of the saga and I suspect that it will be revisited from time to time. This evening, in view of what the Secretary of State announced earlier, I am minded to support the Government. But before my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) gets too broad a grin on her face, I should tell her that if her grin becomes much broader, I certainly will not support them.

8.36 pm

**Mr. Harry Cohen** (Leyton): There is an enormous amount of public anxiety and anger at the consequences of the mishandling of the national health service in London. Some of the blame is put at the door of the managers, but most of it is laid at the door of the Secretary of State for Health and the Government.

I pay tribute to the few hon. Members who have spoken out and stood up to be counted tonight. They made eloquent speeches, fighting for their constituents and for London hospitals. They made a good point when they said that the Secretary of State refuses to listen to the concern of Londoners and refuses to acknowledge the reality of what is going on in the health service. I shall give some examples of the realities.

Casualty Watch recently published a report stating that it carried out 11 spot checks in London hospitals between April 1994 and February 1995. It found that more than 170 people had been waiting more than five hours on trolleys in those London hospitals and that most of those who were waiting were elderly. It even found one woman of 101 years old who had been kept waiting for six hours at Queen Mary's university hospital in Roehampton in January this year.

I have taken up the issue. In late February, I complained that my hospital of Whipps Cross had a shortage of hospital beds and a shortage of trolleys. That shortage meant that patients were left on the ambulance trolleys that had brought them, thus tying up 10 ambulances that would be needed in an emergency. The chief executive of the Forest Healthcare trust said that the hospital was overwhelmed.

Waltham Forest community health council has just published a report giving examples of the crisis in the district. It stated that one woman who had a burst appendix was a priority 1 patient; she had a four-hour wait to see the doctor. She was in great pain and had to wait a total of seven and three quarter hours before she was found a bed. Another woman with a priority 2 illness was finally treated after a nine-and-a-half hour wait. An elderly woman with diabetes who had recently had a triple bypass operation was seen briefly by a doctor after half an hour, but she was then left on a trolley for seven and a half hours without any food or drink.

Another case involved an elderly disabled woman who had a nine-hour wait for a bed. Three months later, she went back to the accident and emergency unit with pleurisy. On that occasion, she waited 12 hours on a trolley for a bed, which eventually was not available, and she was sent home.

Those are just four examples in a recent report from my local community health council. It points out that Whipps Cross has one of the busiest casualty departments in the country, with more than 80,000 patients. The number of patients has increased by 3,000 in the past three months because of the closure of Bart's accident and emergency department and the knock-on effects of that; there has also been the staff shortage that was mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing).

The CHC takes apart the official patients charter, to which the Government keep referring, to say how wonderful things are. It says that the

"official patients charter statistics disguise the major problems patients face when using A and E services."

It goes on to say:

"it is claimed that 97 per cent. of patients at Whipps A and E have an 'initial assessment' within five minutes, but this does not acknowledge that they then have to wait for a proper assessment to be carried out. That can take one hour."

Official Forest Healthcare trust figures relating to patients in each priority group seen by a doctor show that 78 per cent. of priority 1 patients are seen within two hours, 82 per cent. of priority 2 patients are seen within four hours, and 84 per cent. of priority 3 patients are seen within four hours. My CHC asks, "What of the patients who are not seen within those times—how long do they wait?" Even after being seen by a doctor, a patient may wait hours for further attention because of the pressure of work on the A and E Department.

Several hon. Members have referred to the London ambulance service. We all know that it descended into a shambles when the computer broke down. Many of us would blame the Government in their pressure to privatise the service. Whatever the situation, let us look at the current position. Mr. John James, who is responsible for the service, has written to me saying:

"Overall, the total cost of the emergency services has risen from £63.9 million in 1994-95 to £82.2 million in 1995-96, an increase of 28.6 per cent. However, because £4 million in 1994-95 was met from central funds in 1994-95, which were not made available in 1995-96, the overall increase in cost to DHAs was 37.2 per cent."

That means that district health authorities in London have had to find an extra £22.3 million from their hard-pressed budgets to pay for that London ambulance service shambles and to try to get the service back into order. That £22.3 million has been taken out of patient treatment in London, whereas the Government should have provided that money.

The hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) talked about the £2 million for Edgware that has bought his vote tonight. A couple of million will come out of patient care in Edgware and in Hendon to pay for the London ambulance service. The money with which the hon. Gentleman has been bought off has been swallowed up very quickly. *[Interruption.]* That certainly is true. I have done a survey and I can show hon. Members the results.

The House of Commons Library presented for me figures that show that 83 hospitals in London have closed between 1979, when the Government were first elected, and March last year. On top of that, there have been a large number of accident and emergency unit closures. Many more are in the pipeline. All that has occurred without any publicly stated Government policy or anybody's policy on accident and emergency provision in London. Those closures are carrying on apace because trust managers regard them as the best way of further reducing acute beds in their areas. A and E closures are financially driven.

Our vote tonight is the last chance for London Members, particularly Conservative Members, to save the health service in London, particularly A and E provision in London. Even if some A and E units are not under threat now—and many of them are—the Government will come for hon. Members' accident and emergency units if they carry the day.

In the 1980s, the Government said—they have continued to try to use the phrase—that the health service was safe in their hands. There comes a time when that phrase must be proved, and we shall find out tonight. We

*[Mr. Harry Cohen]*

shall discover whether the Conservatives can stand by it. Unless London Conservative Members show courage, as some who have spoken tonight have done, a significant proportion of the NHS in London will slip like sand through our fingers.

8.45 pm

**Mr. Roger Sims** (Chislehurst): I have previously commended my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for her courage in tackling the issue of London hospitals, and I do so again today. The amendment refers to the 20 or more reports that have recommended action that is clearly overdue. The action that was needed my right hon. Friend has initiated. To bring everything to a complete halt now, as the motion appears to demand—indeed, those were the words of the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms Jackson) a few minutes ago—seems to me to be unacceptable. If the Opposition thought that the wording of their motion would seduce me into supporting them, they have failed.

Of course, these are matters in which, whatever decisions are taken, some people will be upset. Every hospital has a loyal following of local residents, patients, general practitioners, doctors and nurses at the hospital, and doctors and nurses who have trained there and perhaps have moved on. If we always bowed to all their wishes, there would never be any changes. But, if it is proposed to close a hospital or substantially to change its character, there must be a process of consultation. That, surely, is a moral obligation as well as a legal obligation. Consultation surely means listening to the views expressed and considering them, and not being averse to responding to reasoned arguments.

The Secretary of State and the Minister for Health have their advisers—political advisers and medical professional advisers—but they should take account, too, of what may be different advice offered by others who are as well qualified professionally and of those who are as able, if not better able, to reflect the views of the communities affected, including, of course, local Members of Parliament. I fear that that is not always done. My right hon. Friend enjoys my admiration as a most able, enthusiastic and dedicated Secretary of State, but a Minister must also be a politician, and in politics one is more likely to get things done if one listens to what people have to say and tries to take them with one.

My concerns, as the House will be aware, are with the proposals concerning Guy's and St. Thomas's hospitals. Let me make it clear that the issue is not about spending money on those hospitals in inner London as against expenditure further outside London or in the suburbs. Indeed, I shall want the Bromley hospital trust to be given adequate resources to enable it to develop a new hospital on the Farnborough hospital site. In this case, the issue is not about closing down complete sites, because both sites will remain open.

It is certainly not a Guy's versus St. Thomas's contest. The issue is the need to obtain the best possible use of limited resources—that is buildings, equipment and staff. It is, to quote the words of the Secretary of State in a letter that she wrote to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes),

"to ensure the most efficient and clinically coherent balance of services between its sites".

On 29 March, when the consultation process was completed and the proposals were on the Secretary of State's desk awaiting a decision, I secured a Wednesday morning debate on Guy's hospital. I summarised the original and final proposals for the two hospitals and the consultation process. I spoke of the work of the Save Guy's Hospital Campaign, of which I am joint chairman. I outlined our concerns and raised a number of issues.

A week later, the Secretary of State announced that she was confirming the proposals without modification. Of course I accept her word that what I and others said in the debate was read and considered, but I am sure that she will understand that some people have the impression that our words were completely ignored. Personally, I was surprised that no attempt was made to answer the points that were raised in the debate before the decision was announced. I have since had a letter from my right hon. Friend, but some of the issues remain unresolved.

It would be unreasonable of me to repeat the speech that I made on 29 March, even if time allowed, which it obviously does not, but the Government amendment invites me to call on the Government to ensure that their decisions on London hospital services are carried forward.

If I subscribed to that, I would be endorsing, among a number of other propositions, first, leaving the City of London and its 300,000 daily commuters—some of whom are my constituents—after 1998 without any accident and emergency facilities to deal with another Cannon street train crash or Bishopsgate bomb outrage; secondly, not using to the full Philip Harris house for the purposes for which it was designed and built at a cost of £154 million; thirdly, using Guy's for day surgery, elective surgery and minimally invasive therapy without any intensive care facility on the site; fourthly, the separation rather than the integration of out-patient and in-patient services for specialties such as renal, oncology, cardiology and ENT; and, fifthly, I would be endorsing the expenditure of £90 million on new building and refurbishment at St. Thomas's to accommodate the services moved from Guy's, while leaving some 19 floors or 35,000 sq m of unused space at Guy's.

I cannot in all conscience endorse such plans, so the House will understand why I shall not support the amendment which calls for their implementation.

8.52 pm

**Mr. Andrew Mackinlay** (Thurrock): I consider that London's hospitals are underfunded and I appreciate all the arguments advanced by hon. Members representing part of Middlesex and London in respect of the Edgware general hospital. Before I came to the House, I worked in Golders Green for 12 or 13 years and I empathise with local people who appreciate and want to keep the accident and emergency department open in Edgware. I shall return to that in a moment.

The motion refers to London's health service. Strictly speaking, there is no such thing: there are two regional health authorities. My area of Essex is part of the North Thames region and in the context of today's debate I would argue that it is part of London's health service.

I am unique inasmuch as I am the only Opposition Member representing Essex and the counties that skirt London or the M25 ring. I can legitimately claim to speak on behalf of those constituents who are not represented in

the Chamber at the moment, except by the Government Whip, the hon. Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns), who has to remain silent.

We listen to the Government's argument that the closures will provide additional resources for counties outside London, but that is not the experience of my constituents and those who live in areas surrounding London. Frankly, we do not believe the Government. *[Interruption.]* Somebody from a sedentary position said, "Rubbish," but my constituency of Thurrock endured the pain and anxiety of losing the accident and emergency department at Orsett hospital.

Regrettably, only when the closure of the accident and emergency department at Edgware general is proposed, or hon. Members representing Westminster and the City are aggrieved, does the House pay attention to a crisis that is not peculiar to the old GLC area, the boundaries of which resulted from a decision made in the House of Lords at 2 am in 1963 and which do not represent "London" in the context of this debate. London is much wider, especially with regard to health provision.

Conservative Members are aggravated by the political fallout that was demonstrated in stark terms last week. As we approach a general election, they want to distance themselves from the Government's policy of cuts in the national health service. They did not speak up when the accident and emergency department in my constituency was closed or when accident and emergency departments were closed elsewhere around the M25 ring.

It is time to make it clear that the Government are cutting hospital provision for many people in London and elsewhere. I heard all the arguments advanced by the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) excusing why he would not support the Opposition motion tonight but would sustain the Government. They involve palliatives and promises that extra facilities will be provided as compensation for losing A and E departments. They are not worth the paper they are written on.

I should say, as a lesson for other hon. Members who are considering supporting the Government, that when our accident and emergency department was closed in Thurrock, we were assured that the rest of Orsett hospital would be maintained. They were solemn and binding undertakings, but a few months ago it became clear from a leak that they intended to close the whole hospital.

My constituents and others joined in a massive campaign to retain Orsett hospital, or what was left of it. We succeeded, but we do not believe that that will the prevent faceless men and women who run our health authorities and the trust from again trying to close totally our Orsett hospital.

I use my constituency as an example of what could happen elsewhere. It is in the fastest growing area of south-east England outside London—the Thames gateway—yet the madness of Government policy and their lack of planning led to an attempt to close our hospital.

My constituents now have to travel to Basildon to get hospital care, which has put an inordinate extra burden on Basildon and other hospitals. My hon. Friend the Member for Barking (Ms Hodge) described how Oldchurch hospital would close and put extra demands on Harold Wood hospital. Since my local accident and emergency department closed, my constituents are putting extra demands on Harold Wood hospital, because that is one of the places where they are taken by bus or ambulance to receive accident and emergency and other treatment. It is foolish that this policy should be allowed to continue.

The motion calls for a halt and a major review. That is prudent. It would be appropriate to encompass in any review everything in an area wider than the old GLC area—everything around the M25 ring—as we are as vulnerable to the cuts as elsewhere.

There has been some commendation of the few Conservative Members who have said that they will not support the Government tonight. I join in that, but there is a danger of going over the top and implying that the hon. Member for Hendon, North (Sir J. Gorst) is equivalent to the Archangel Gabriel. I give him full marks but where has he been all this time? He is faced with the closure of an accident and emergency department on his own doorstep now, but he would not have dreamed of supporting me in defending the A and E department at Orsett. I do not suppose that he knows where Orsett is to be found.

If Conservative Members generally are concerned about the thrust of Government policies, they must support the Opposition motion so that the Government will pause and rethink the totality of the policies on which they are now embarking. I do not know whether it was implied or said by an Opposition Member on radio this morning that this is not a party political matter. If so, I dissociate myself from that remark because it is party political. In the months leading to the next general election, I shall unashamedly point the prosecutor's finger at Conservative Members who do not join us in the lobby tonight. They are all the same and they are all to blame by acquiescing through their silence in a rundown and haemorrhaging of the NHS in and around London. It is time to spell that out without ambiguity.

I cannot find words to describe the lasting resentment among my constituents at the Government's deceit and betrayal over hospital care. I include in that the people of Basildon, whom our loss at Orsett also affects. My constituents now have to be sent to Basildon hospital and endure inordinately long waits on trolleys and in the casualty department. In addition, many of my constituents are taken not only to Harold Wood hospital but across the River Thames to Kent, such is the absurd lack of planning.

I welcome being able, perhaps for the first time, to muscle in on something that is wrongly described as a "London debate": it goes much wider. It affects people in Harlow, Basildon, Thurrock, Gravesham, Dartford, Slough and other constituencies around the London area, which are not being properly represented in the House, and whose national health service is not being championed by Conservative Members.

9.2 pm

**Mr. Hartley Booth** (Finchley): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) who, as usual, was robust in his remarks, and on this occasion robustly wrong.

The debate has been characterised by a mirage of the past, suggesting that the health service in London was always better then—a sort of never never land of wondrous results. In fact, we are dealing with the same problem that has existed for hundreds of years.

*[Mr. Hartley Booth]*

Liverpool Street and Broad Street railway stations are built on the foundations of a medieval hospital that was well known at the time. Some people might think that it would have been better if it had been kept as a hospital. A retired doctor from St. Thomas's reminded me that 30 years ago patients were left on the floor in a crisis. Only in 1968 was the first accident and emergency consultant in the country appointed. Today, such consultants can be found everywhere. We have been improving, and we should put that fact on the scales tonight.

The Opposition motion criticises the closure of accident and emergency facilities in London, while the Government motion stands for new and better services and says that the Government will take due account of concerns. I hope so. I do not accept that the description "closure of . . . facilities" is apt, accurate, balanced or fair in respect of Barnet. A new hospital costing £61 million is being built, and we are promised that a new casualty unit will be kept open in Edgware. However, I shall be making some demands of my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench.

Edgware hospital is being kept open, and there is a list of improvements for the new area trauma centre to be built at Barnet General hospital, costing £1.5 million. It will offer a major treatment room with greater availability of specialist piped medical gases, decontamination showers and a sound attenuating examination room. The "physical specs", as they are called, state that the centre will be 250 per cent. larger than the present A and E department. There will be an operating theatre for major trauma, diagnostic imaging and a pneumatic tube system—all costing an arm and a leg in more senses than one.

I asked an orthopaedic surgeon at Barnet General for his thoughts on the centre. He welcomed it. He had possibly wanted a new hospital situated midway between the two existing hospitals, but he is grateful and delighted that there will be a new hospital in Barnet—not least because he currently has to travel between Edgware and Barnet in rush hours and in crisis situations. I shall refer to transport later, if there is time. At present that consultant has to cover two hospitals.

Do we want to retain the A and E department on the same basis as at present, as suggested by my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, North (Sir J. Gorst), whom I deeply respect? No—we want to improve on that situation. Are we against all change? Of course not. At present, there is an orthopaedic consultant only at Barnet General and none at Edgware, and there is no maternity department at Barnet. That cannot be left as it is. There must be change.

Safety is paramount, as was mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, West (Mr. Hughes). The Royal College of Surgeons states that 25 per cent. of all deaths in A and E departments are avoidable. I could not have deaths on my conscience, so I must speak out tonight to say that such deaths are avoidable if we have the improved A and E departments that our new hospitals and constituents deserve. We must satisfy the public's fears.

How do we do that? I have been fighting for better transport links across the A1, which is a huge physical barrier. I am grateful to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for saying that she will bear that in mind. We shall be watching for such improvements. We certainly do not want people dying en route to hospital.

I hope that the Edgware injury clinic—the new casualty department, as the chairman of the local NHS trust calls it—will not only have 80 per cent. of current casualties, but that it will be supported by general practitioners, not just nurses or paramedics. We need better transport links and I am glad that we have improved community medicine, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) referred. On behalf of the people of Barnet and Finchley, many of whom cross the A1 to Edgware, although many more go to Barnet, I thank the Government for the new hospital that we are getting. It would be niggardly not to be grateful for it. We shall keep Ministers to the four promises that we have heard today. We shall be watching.

We ask what Labour, whose debate this is, would be doing. Would it reverse the decision over Bart's? Would it reverse the decision to give us a new hospital in Barnet? Would it keep Edgware open? Answer comes there none. The Labour party is vacuous in the absence of real answers to difficult questions in this area. Literature has been quoted to us this evening by my right hon. Friend the Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke). I will quote Shakespeare: the Labour party is

> "full of sound and fury,
> Signifying nothing."

9.11 pm

**Mr. Clive Soley** (Hammersmith): I offer my apologies to the House for having missed the first part of the debate. I am Chairman of the Select Committee on Northern Ireland, which has been taking evidence this afternoon.

I want to speak, if only briefly, on a number of matters. First, I wish to make a point which I suspect may have been made before, so I shall therefore make it briefly: the fundamental problem with the Tomlinson report was that it did not take into account the impact of outer London on inner London. One of the powers and strengths of Professor Jarman's report was that it recognised that inner London could not be treated as though there were some dividing fence between inner and outer London. Once that artificial fence is taken away, the problem in London is seen to be not so simple as Professor Tomlinson's report made out. That is why things have gone badly wrong.

My second point, and one of the prime reasons why the Secretary of State is in such serious trouble, is that the main problem in the health service—one which has to some extent been there since the 1974 management changes, but dramatically more so in recent years—is the lack of an effective method of consultation. As a Conservative Member said, people felt that consultation was not working. That is certainly my experience in west London. The feeling is that things happen without a strategy. I acknowledge that the Secretary of State has said that she wants a strategy for health care in London, but the various community groups, including the community health councils and others who should be taken into the confidence of the hospital management structures, do not feel that they know what is happening or why.

The general feeling about consultation is that a paper is published, people are asked for their views, which they give, but at the end of the day the rubber stamp comes

down reinforcing the original proposal without people's views and comments being taken into account in any effective way. Consequently, there is much anger and lack of understanding when decisions about hospitals' futures are made. A simple but dramatic example occurred in west London when the new Chelsea and Westminster hospital was built, massively over cost—more than £200 million. In retrospect, that was an incredible decision. Had it been made by a local authority, it would probably have led to councillors being surcharged.

The Secretary of State was then faced with the unenviable decision whether to close Charing Cross hospital or Hammersmith hospital. Charing Cross hospital was only 20 years old, but Hammersmith hospital is the world's premier postgraduate medical school with an immense reputation in Britain and overseas. Eventually, the right decision was made and the two hospitals were merged into one trust. However, that still leaves the question of what is to happen to the three large hospitals in west London. It is not that there is over-provision; rather there is under-provision in certain key areas. I receive the same sort of letters as other hon. Members about the lack of bed space and the lack of time for operations.

The closure of an accident and emergency department in effect means the closure of the hospital. That is why there is such concern—certainly in west London and, I suspect, elsewhere—that the purchasing authority, which in my case is the Hammersmith, Hounslow and Ealing authority, will choose to buy from only one hospital, perhaps Charing Cross, leaving Hammersmith, which has had less investment in its accident and emergency department, more vulnerable. If we get into the ball game in which the purchaser decides which accident and emergency department survives, in the long run the purchasers will make the decisions about which hospitals survive. That is not the most sensible way to proceed.

I suspect that psychiatric patients have not been discussed in any great depth today. In my area and, indeed, throughout the capital, the provision of beds for such patients is a major problem. Care in the community is clearly a good policy, which we all endorse—provided that the community facilities are there; if they are not, the policy becomes a disaster. In that event, there is no care in the community. There have been some horrendous cases in recent years.

The provision of housing, hostels and follow-up nursing care is vital, and the lack of psychiatric beds poses a major problem to the safety of patients and, indeed, the public at large. Some of the patients are very disturbed; some, though not all, are offenders. We should bear in mind that the regional secure units also feed into the system of care in the community. There is a human problem for the individuals concerned, but a drastic problem for the health service and the general public.

Let me say this to the Secretary of State: for heaven's sake start looking at a management system which is so secretive that people feel—rightly, in my view—that they do not know who is making the decisions, how those decisions are being made or how they themselves can have any impact on those decisions. The problem with the NHS, in this context, is that it is paid for by the taxpayer but the taxpayer knows virtually nothing about what is being proposed and how the money is to be spent. We need to think long and hard about the sort of management structure that is necessary in the health service to deliver an efficient health care system combined with accountability to the public.

Finally, I do not think that we shall have the morale in the health service that we ought to have until we provide a proper pay structure for nurses, midwives and other key groups who currently feel battered and undervalued.

9.16 pm

**Mr. Hugh Dykes** (Harrow, East): Thank you for calling me at this late stage, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I appreciate it very much. Having launched an Adjournment debate on 5 April which lasted much longer than usual, and having made a long speech on that occasion, I do not resent the fact that others have spoken earlier than me today, and I am glad that the Chair made those selections.

It behoves me to say—as did my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson)—that I shall not be able to support the Government tonight after what I have heard so far. I am extremely disappointed that the Secretary of State was unable to make any significant concessions to alter the drastic position in which we find ourselves.

For geographical reasons, my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, North (Sir J. Gorst) and I—with the permission, approval and support of our other colleagues—have led, for over a year, the great campaign to save the accident and emergency unit of Edgware general hospital from closure. The closure is proposed by the district health authority, and supported by the regional health authority. We continue to think that a grave mistake.

The position is not the same as that of the old central London hospitals—although I wish them well, and do not want them to be closed, either. This vital unit in an outer London borough is heavily used, efficient and popular; as my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, North has said on many occasions, it is also part of a much-loved social institution. It is on the Edgware road, on the border between my constituency and that of my hon. Friend. If it is closed, the journey to Barnet, the Royal Free hospital in Hampstead or the Northwick Park hospital will be too long in congested traffic.

The Northwick Park hospital, incidentally, is the most important district general hospital in my area and the constituencies of Brent, North and Harrow, West. I wish it and its future development well; that does not contradict what I am saying about Edgware general hospital.

I am disappointed. During the last minutes of the debate, the Minister has the chance to make the additional concessions that we would require to support the Government tonight. I would not have any pleasure in supporting a Labour motion. I cannot remember the previous occasion when I did that. That is not the job of a Government-supporting Member.

I strongly support all the Government's policies, but we need extra movement, an extra concession and extra realism from Ministers. They should not respond only to the medical bureaucrats in their Department, whose easier solutions are to combine units to try to save accounting costs at the margin. Everyone can do that. It is not a particularly difficult exercise, despite the obvious

*[Mr. Hugh Dykes]*

complexities, but for the sake of all our constituents—the human beings in our constituency—we want the hospital to be saved.

If the A and E department goes, the hospital dies. That is an obvious reality. Everyone knows that. Every medical expert knows that. If the Minister could make extra concessions saying that closure would not take place by the target date, that further time would be given for consideration, and that the Government were not humiliated or embarrassed by having second thoughts on an unwise proposal, I could reconsider my position. From what has been said so far, I doubt whether that will happen, but this is the last opportunity for the Government to say, "Yes, we have listened not only to the people, but to our own Members of Parliament."

9.20 pm

**Mr. David Congdon** (Croydon, North-East): This is our fourth debate on London's health in the past 13 months. That shows the level of interest in and concern about the future of health care in London.

One of the most depressing things about today's debate has been the unwillingness of Opposition Members to face up to the difficult challenges involved in taking decisions on health care in London. We have had a bit of a pretence that London is not over-resourced in terms of teaching hospitals and specialist facilities, but the facts stand for themselves. In 1993-94, average spending per capita in inner London was £565 per person compared with the national average of £370 per person. That shows that London is over-resourced.

In saying that, I recognise that today pressures exist on beds in London. That is why I have urged, and am pleased to urge again, caution on the pace of change in London. Many changes are occurring at the same time. We have care in the community and the internal market. All those issues must be taken into account.

In listening to the debate, especially in relation to Edgware general, Barnet, Bart's, St. Thomas's and Guy's hospitals, I am struck by the need for us to redefine what we mean by accident and emergency services. People who are injured in a major road accident, who suffer a severe stroke or cardiac arrest or who need intensive care, do not care which hospital an ambulance takes them to, so long as they receive first-class treatment. Frankly, they do not want to be taken to a third-rate A and E department where no consultant is on duty, where perhaps a junior has worked for only a few months, and where their chances of surviving are slight. We need to distinguish firmly between what I would define as major trauma centres and minor injuries departments.

My plea to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State would be this: we need to be clear what we are talking about when discussing minor injuries departments. I should like them to be open 24 hours a day with a general practitioner on duty. It is rightly said that one of the problems in London is that the people of inner London use their hospital rather than their GP surgeries. That is partly because of poor primary care. We will not change that and, in a sense, I am not sure that it really matters, so long as those people receive the care they need. That is why local provision of minor injuries units could go a long way to allaying public concern about the closure of major A and E departments.

My only other main point, because I know that time is short tonight, relates to Bart's and the Royal London hospital. I have no axe to grind in relation to whether Bart's stays open or closes, but I have a concern, which I have expressed before, about the capital costs involved in relocating to the Royal London, which in gross terms amount to about £240 million. Given the comparatively small scale of the saving involved—£30 million a year—I am concerned about whether that represents good value for money, especially bearing in mind the fact that the dual-site option would achieve roughly half the savings at a small capital cost.

We all know the extent to which capital costs can be underestimated and revenue savings overestimated. I urge my right hon. Friend to ensure that the figures for Bart's and the Royal London are subjected to close scrutiny. As an outer London Member who for many years has been pressing for major capital investment at the local Mayday hospital, and who now knows the large sums that will be invested in the facilities at the Royal London, I must question whether that is the best value for money. We need rigorously to assess whether the single-site option is always better than the dual-site option.

I have no reservation in supporting the general direction of the changes proposed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. She has taken courageous decisions, and she deserves our support.

9.25 pm

**Mr. Nicholas Brown** (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): My hon. Friends the Members for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms Jackson) and for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) echoed many of the speeches made during the debate when they asked the Government to think again. Whatever can be said for the Government's position as it has been represented tonight, it cannot possibly be said that it commands public support.

The petition to save Guy's hospital has been signed by more than 1 million people. Three mayors from three separate boroughs, one Labour, two Tory—at least, that was the roll call at the time—visited the Under-Secretary of State to discuss the Department's plans for the Edgware hospital. They represented 700,000 residents in north-west London. They were bluntly dismissed, told that the decision had already been made and that the time for negotiations had passed. The right hon. Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) expressed concern about that, as well he might. Some 183 local councillors have expressed their opinion on the Government's plan to close Edgware hospital. Only one has said that he supports the Government's position; the others do not.

Today, we have had the promise of a minor injuries unit at the earliest possible date. What sort of promise is that? Why was not it promised for the earliest possible date before today's debate? As my hon. Friend the Member for Barking (Ms Hodge) pointed out, such a promise is a con; it is nothing of any substance.

Some 1,244 people responded to the consultation on the Government's plans for Bart's—88 per cent. opposed the Government's plans. More than 1,000 people attended the health care crisis in London conference, which was organised by the National Health Service Support

Federation last February. The conference unanimously adopted a resolution demanding an immediate halt to the shutdown of accident and emergency departments, to bed reductions and to hospital closures—a call that has been echoed by Labour Members throughout the debate.

The right hon. and learned Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor), no doubt unintentionally, made our point for us. While defending the broad thrust of Government policy, he also said that he has fought hard for local provision in his constituency. We can understand him saying that, so why cannot he allow his parliamentary colleagues the same right to fight for Edgware and the service that it provides to their constituents? My hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) pointed to the hypocrisy of some Conservative Members who support the thrust of Government policy, but defend provision in their own areas while not supporting other Members of Parliament, including Labour Members, who are trying to defend similar facilities in their constituencies.

Much has been said in the debate about political courage. My hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) referred to the political courage of those Conservative Members who will not support the Government in the Lobby tonight. That takes courage, and I applaud them for that.

The political courage of the Secretary of State for Health has also been mentioned. I am all in favour of political courage, but not when it is providing the motivation to do the wrong thing. As has been said frequently in the debates which we have had on these topics, the Tomlinson report, on which the Government's decisions are founded, is fatally flawed. Tomlinson got it wrong. My hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) said that the claim that London is over-bedded is inaccurate. London is not over-bedded. We are all grateful to Professor Jarman for the work that he has conducted which has shown that London is not over-bedded, but may well be under-bedded.

The hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) talked about the over-provision of resources for London, but that is not true. It used to be believed, as the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) pointed out, that London got 20 per cent. of the funding for only 15 per cent. of the population. However, the figures which the Department of Health publish include the costs for London allowance and for teaching facilities, and when allowance in the calculations is made for those additional costs, the funding and the population figures are broadly in line.

It was believed when Tomlinson reported that somehow primary care provision—I shall have more to say about this later—would reduce the demand for hospital services. It is my view that that is a false premise. By increasing the number of people who see a GP, the rate of diagnosis will be increased, and this will increase the number of referrals to London's hospitals.

Tomlinson believed that the location of casualty services was unimportant, but a number of hon Members—not least some Conservatives—have said that they do not accept that point of view. The closer a seriously injured person is to a casualty department, the more likely that he will be saved. Clinicians talk about the golden hour, which is vital. Certainly, a patient's chances are substantially diminished if the method of treating him is to put him on a helicopter and fly him up to Leeds. The right hon. Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) made that point rather well.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms Jackson) said that it was a mistake to assume that the two London regions can perform like an average English region. London is in many ways a special case. It has a large transient population, high levels of social deprivation and poverty, more mental illness, a lower than average provision for personal social services, and poor provision for the long-term care for the elderly. That puts extra pressure on accident and emergency units, and to some extent it is right to say that accident and emergency units are being used as a substitute for GP provision and good primary care.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) made the point very well that Tomlinson misunderstood the relationship between inner and outer London. Tomlinson believed that patients from outer London do not make significant use of inner London hospitals. That is just wrong. Recent research carried out by the King's Fund shows that, of the 500,000 in-patients treated in inner London, 150,000 came from outer London and from other parts of the country. My hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Dowd) made reference to the service which Guy's hospital provides to his constituents.

When calculating the level of hospital provision in the capital, the Tomlinson report did not make a distinction between different types of hospital bed; it should have done. There is an important distinction between surgical beds, which are mostly used for elective cases, and medical beds, which are mostly used for emergency cases. The broad-brush proposal to close some 4,200 beds ignores the complexity of maintaining sufficient medical beds for urgent cases. If that were not understood at the time, we are informed every week of the outcome of that misunderstanding by the local press, who have yet another incident to draw to our attention.

The Tomlinson report referred several times to transitional funding. It was regarded as necessary to facilitate hospital closures and the development of primary and community services. The report did not cost those programmes and the Government provided no new money for them.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Timms) spoke of a spiral of poor health and under-achievement, and referred to the recent King's Fund report. That is of enormous importance for the whole country, but it has specific and special relevance to inner London, so it is right that we should look at primary care provision in London.

The Secretary of State is fond of quoting specialist experts—usually employed in her own Department—who support her point of view. Professor David London of the Royal College of Physicians said:

> "London, like other big cities, needed a degree of rationalisation and that was always going to be painful. But it needed to be thought out. Money should have been put into it to ease the change, instead of being the cash-saving exercise it now appears to be."

The hon. Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey) spoke about improvements in primary care. My hon. Friend the Member for Woolwich (Mr. Austin-Walker) made the sensible point that it is neither fair nor right to get rid of hospital beds before enhanced primary care provision is put in place.

*[Mr. Nicholas Brown]*

Between 1984 and 1992, the number of general practitioners per head of the population increased by 10 per cent. in England, but that was not so in London. Over the same period in inner London, there was a 2 per cent. decrease and only a 2 per cent. increase in outer London. Yet, not surprisingly, London has the highest percentage of waiting lists of a year or more. The Secretary of State made much of the fact that the figures are coming down, but she should have said that London still has the highest figures and the lowest reduction in waiting lists from December 1994. London has fewer family health centres per thousand of population than Newcastle, Leeds, Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester or Bristol. It thus has a specific primary care problem, which the Government have not yet resolved.

It is no secret that we hope to encourage Conservative Members to support us in the Lobby tonight. The House should be treated to some advice, which I hope it will respect because it was commissioned by the Government. It comes from the chief executives of the inner London health authorities whom the Government appointed. In their recent report, they say:

"On the basis of the evidence presented to us there are reasons for anxiety about the ability of the system to cope with a further round of bed closures."

Yet assuredly, if our motion is defeated tonight, the system will have to cope with a further round of bed closures. They say:

"Some hospitals were found to be operating at 100 per cent. occupancy much of the time, and an average of 90-95 per cent. was common . . . generally speaking an average level of 85 per cent. occupancy is to be preferred."

So the hospitals are working at capacity. They said:

"The overall conclusion is that London's acute hospitals are operating under very considerable pressure."

I have not quoted those comments to make a party political point. We all have a duty to represent our constituents in this place and, as we consider how to vote tonight, we should consider those points, which come not from me but from the chief executives of the London health authorities. Every hon. Member would do well to bear them in mind.

Mr. Alan Lettin of the Royal College of Surgeons, speaking for health care professionals, says:

"Consultants feel the facilities are inadequate for the service we are expected to provide. We did warn the Government. The basis on which the cuts have been made was the King's Fund report, which has now been discredited.

What consultants would say to the Government is: 'We never believed your figures because there are too many patients waiting for beds, emergencies and for routine surgery.'"

My hon. Friend the Member for Barking echoed that point.

If I am to encourage Conservative Members to support us in the Lobbies tonight, perhaps I should quote from someone whom I know that they all respect—the Secretary of State for Wales. In a speech on 4 April 1995, he said:

"I do not wish to see bed reductions while waiting lists are still quite long"—

but waiting lists in London have just reached an all-time high of almost 180,000. He said:

"Make sure there are enough intensive care beds"—

but recent tragedies in London and the south-east have shown that there are dangerously few intensive care beds.

One of the saddest aspects of the debate is to go, as I did recently, to Phillip Harris house to see the newly installed provision for intensive care beds. It was explained to me that all that provision is to be ripped out and smashed to pieces, even after it has been paid for, because the Government are no longer willing to provide the revenue funding. That is a shame. It is an act of vandalism, and should be resisted by the House.

The Secretary of State for Wales said:

"Make sure there are enough general medical and surgical beds."

That is what our motion says, so I invite him, at least, to vote for it tonight.

The Secretary of State for Wales said:

"I suspect it is a myth that it is cheaper to close the older hospital and do everything in a new large one."

My hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore) made the same argument. He may not often be found on the same side as the Secretary of State for Wales, but he made the same argument when he said that the transfer of services from the Bart's site to the Royal London hospital is by no means a move that will save money, let alone do anything else.

The Save Guy's Campaign commissioned a report by independent consultants, which showed that a retention of an accident and emergency unit and in-patient services at Guy's was financially viable. Those arguments deserve consideration and, dare I say it, reconsideration.

The motion does not demand—as the Labour party would ideally like it to—reconsideration by an independent organisation. It asks only for reconsideration by the Secretary of State for Health. It asks her to think again.

The Secretary of State for Wales, who may be the next Secretary of State for Health, said:

"The local hospital remains a cherished institution."

Of course, he was speaking for Wales, but he might have been speaking for Edgware as well. He said:

"I am asking the health authorities to slow down their passion for reorganising. It must go at a pace people accept."

He is certainly not the only Conservative Member of Parliament to have said that recently. He also said, referring to reorganisation:

"It must be based on health arguments, not financial considerations."

The hon. Member for Hendon, North (Sir J. Gorst) said:

"human beings, not balance sheets, come first."

That remark found a cheer from the Opposition, at least.

I urge the House to listen carefully to what was said tonight by Conservative Members as well as Labour Members, worried for their constituents. This is the last chance for health provision in London. The Opposition's motion deserves the support of the whole House in the Division tonight.

9.42 pm

**The Minister for Health (Mr. Gerald Malone):** Never has there been a more unlikely suitor of Conservative Members than the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown). It was an astonishing performance, in which he admitted that he had not even been able to table the motion that he wanted to.

I wonder who stopped him. Is it yet another story of a split between the hon. Gentleman and the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett)?

**Mr. Nicholas Brown:** It is self-restraint.

**Mr. Malone:** Doubtless, when he takes over, we shall see the end of all that, shall we not?

**Mr. David Hinchliffe** (Wakefield): When my hon. Friend takes over?

**Mr. Malone:** From his right hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South.

I thought that in this, the fourth debate about health in London in which I have spoken as Minister of State, we might have heard something positive from the right hon. Member for Derby, South or from the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East. However, I agreed entirely with my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor) when he said that there was no policy; that we had heard nothing in the debate about what the Labour party would do. On four successive occasions, health in London has been debated and we have heard nothing positive. That point was reiterated by my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-East (Mr. Congdon).

Today's debate gave the Opposition the opportunity to fill in the blank pages of their policy. They could have told the House what they would do about London's health service. They could have told it, and Londoners, about their plans to improve primary care and prepare hospitals in London for the 21st century. We heard nothing about that. The Opposition could have made commitments to validate their charge, perhaps, that the Government have got it wrong.

With any charge from any responsible Opposition that the Government have got it wrong comes an important corollary: they must have an argument about what they would do to put it right. I thought that if we did not hear it from the right hon. Member for Derby, South, we might hear it from her hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East, but we heard nothing.

Let me sum up the Government's case briefly. It is in three parts. First, clinical excellence is very important for London's hospitals. That means bringing specialist services together. It means, of course, that some hospitals have to change and, indeed, that some have to close. There was consensus on that under the reign of the right hon. Lady's predecessor, but that seems to have disappeared. Other hospitals—for example, Edgware, which has been quite rightly mentioned frequently in the debate—will have to change in character to community hospitals, delivering care closer to patients than they were able to do before. That change is in the interests of the community.

It is extremely important to meet the challenges of technological change, as well as those associated with increasing day care, earlier discharge and the falling number of referrals from outside London—not just from outer London to inner London hospitals, but from the home counties and the rest of the country.

**Mr. David Wilshire** (Spelthorne): Has my hon. Friend had the chance to study the letter that I sent to him from my health authority? It explained that the rapidly accelerating switch to treating people locally meant that, last year, North West Surrey health authority had to encourage my local GPs and local consultants to persuade their patients to go to central London rather than be treated locally, to use up contract money. I must tell my hon. Friend that my constituents want to be treated locally, not bundled off to central London to help to keep other hospitals viable.

**Mr. Malone:** I have read the letter that my hon. Friend sent me. He made a valid point, which will be echoed by many hon. Members.

It is important that London meets the challenge of changing referrals. It is essential to ensure that funds that are allocated to health authorities in London go on patient care and are not swallowed by high-cost institutions.

The investment that the Government have made in primary care for London—£210 million in recent years—is second to none and is transforming the face of primary care in the city and bringing new facilities on stream on a day-to-day basis.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) asked the fundamental question: is London being overfunded? If he looks at the weighted capitation basis of funding, he will see that it is overresourced by £91 million. That does not take into account top-sliced funding that goes towards transitional payments to maintain institutions. That overfunding is not the main argument, because the hon. Gentleman and other hon. Members who clearly have constituency interests in the city should ask themselves whether they want to see the resources that are given to their health authorities, which are meant to be spent on patient care, absorbed by institutions that are not run on an efficient basis. I suggest that, in their constituency interests, that should not be so.

My right hon. Friend the Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke) asked specifically about consideration of the York report. I can tell him that it was given proper consideration. The Treasury has scrutinised the business case and it said that the case for a single-site solution seems robust and well founded in contrast to what was put forward.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Putney made a number of valid points about the difficulty of the detail. I agree that the detail is difficult. That is what the Opposition find difficult to understand. Until now, they have all gone with the policy for change and argued that change is essential, but when we get down to the agenda of change, they disappear over the horizon without an idea to bring to bear on the argument.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Putney asked about the role of the purchasing authority with regard to the hospital in his constituency. The health authority is still to be persuaded about that case, but I have no doubt that my right hon. and learned Friend will follow up the representations that he has already made to me, and that he will continue to press the authority very firmly about that matter.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Chelsea (Sir N. Scott) raised an important point about the Royal Brompton hospital. My Department and the Royal Brompton are currently looking at various development possibilities and I know that my right hon. Friend continues to make strong representations on the hospital's behalf. My hon. Friend the Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey) emphasised the technological advances that have

*[Mr. Malone]*

been made in health care. It is important that we recognise technology changes and build hospitals for the 21st century; we must not be left behind.

I now come to the comments of my right hon. Friend the Member for Brent, North (Sir R. Boyson) and my hon. Friends the Members for Hendon, North (Sir J. Gorst) and for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes). They have clear constituency concerns, and I must admit quite frankly that I cannot meet all the points that they raised. However, I ask them to bear in mind the fact that Edgware hospital will not close, as has been suggested in the popular press. I know that they recognise that fact.

Edgware hospital will remain as a community hospital that will deliver patient care to the community. It will provide a minor accident treatment service, which will cater for approximately 50 per cent. of those who use the current accident and emergency service. Some £60 million will be invested in the hospital in Brent in order to turn it into a first-class facility.

**Sir John Gorst:** So that I may be absolutely certain that I will enter the correct Division Lobby this evening, I ask my hon. Friend to leave aside the palliatives, sedatives and tranquillisers that have been dressed up as concessions and, even at this 11th hour, to give an undertaking that the accident and emergency department at Edgware hospital will remain open.

**Mr. Malone:** I cannot give that undertaking, because it would be the wrong thing to do. The Government will put in place new, worthwhile facilities, and I hope that hon. Members in the area will be able to reassure their constituents about service provision. If my hon. Friend were to visit some minor units that have been established already—for example, the St. Charles's hospital minor injuries unit that was referred to in the debate—he would find that they are first-class facilities that could meet the needs of his constituents extremely well. *[Interruption.]* I hear an intervention from a sedentary position that no one believes me. I do not ask Labour Members to believe what I say; they should go and see for themselves what those units, which are close to the community, can provide. They are excellently run and they have zero waiting times. They are first-class facilities.

**Mr. Dykes:** Even if the Minister cannot give that concession to my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, North (Sir J. Gorst), can he not at least postpone the closure of the A and E unit at Edgware hospital and confirm that there will be additional ambulance provision pending further examination of the whole question?

**Mr. Malone:** My hon. Friend knows about the additional ambulance provision that has been promised already. I cannot promise any further delay or postponement of the closure of the A and E unit at Edgware hospital. However, I emphasise the pledge that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has given, that we will put in place equivalent, if not better, facilities that will soon be up and running. That is not merely a pledge from Ministers or from the health authorities; buildings of bricks and mortar will be occupied by doctors and nurses who will run the facilities in a proper way. I hope that my hon. Friend will accept my assurance.

I come to the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe), who is Chairman of the Select Committee on Health. She referred to the way in which the Committee scrutinises the Government's policies. That scrutiny is very welcome and I know that my right hon. Friend, fresh from this debate, is looking forward to appearing before the Select Committee tomorrow.

The hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) talked about London waiting figures. May I say to the whole House that there has been a tremendous achievement on waiting figures in London? In the 12 months up to March 1995, the number of people who had been waiting for more than one year fell by 26.3 per cent. That is an enormous achievement. I do not know why Opposition Members who claim to support the health service denigrate it when it makes such achievements, and try to cast it down.

I tell the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East that the health service in London is not as good as in other parts of the country because we have got to get London's health service into the same shape as the health service in other parts of the country. It is the Opposition motion that stands exactly in the way of that.

The hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) made an interesting speech. He gave a historical analysis of what has happened in health, with which I do not quite agree. He harked back to the good old days before 1990, when he said that there was a consensus on health policy. I remember being in the House between 1983 and 1987. To echo the words of my right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler), if that was consensus before 1990, God help us if war had broken out, because the truth is that the Opposition have attempted to thwart every attempt made by the Government since 1979 to reform the health service and make it more efficient.

The hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Austin-Walker) talked about resources and said that we would have to be extremely careful not to take away care provision before we had provided other facilities. That is right, and it was one of the pledges that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gave the House; I am pleased to reiterate it in my winding-up speech.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) welcomed the primary care initiative. *[Interruption.]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order. The House should settle down and hear the last minutes of the Minister's winding-up speech. The House is much too noisy. Too many meetings are taking place.

**Mr. Malone:** I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South welcomed that initiative. I assure him that the pledge to continue to improve the London ambulance service will be honoured.

The right hon. Member for Derby, South made much in her remarks about the NHS building programme. I have to tell her, on behalf of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, that my right hon. Friend stated that there had been one new building programme a week in the five years to March 1994. I have to apologise on behalf of my right hon. Friend, because she misled the House. That would have led to a total of 260 building programmes over that period. There were, in fact, 375 building schemes, each costing over a million pounds, completed

in an NHS programme worth over £1 billion nationally. Since 1979, the Government have put £22.5 billion into NHS building programmes.

What we get from the Opposition is impresario politics. Today, as the right hon. Member for Derby, South was speaking, we saw that the soundbites were taken by the Leader of the Opposition as he appeared in Bart's hospital. I have a question that everybody in Bart's hospital would like to ask the Opposition. If they take the political credit for appearing to save Bart's hospital, are they prepared to stand up at the Dispatch Box today, tonight, at this moment, and say that they would save Bart's hospital?

**Mr. Nicholas Brown:** The Minister will find out in the Lobby in three minutes' time.

**Mr. Malone:** The hon. Gentleman gave no policy commitment or anything of that sort. There never has been from the Labour party.

At the core of this debate is the point about hospitals.

"There is a tendency in some quarters to defend the very small hospital on the ground of its localism and intimacy . . . but everybody knows today that if a hospital is to be efficient it must provide a number of specialised services. Although I am not myself a devotee of bigness for bigness sake, I would rather be kept alive in the efficient if cold altruism of a large hospital than expire in a gush of warm sympathy in a small one."—[*Official Report*, 30 April 1946; Vol. 422, c. 44.]

I wonder whether the Opposition agree with that. They probably do not. That is from the speech of Aneurin Bevan in moving the Second Reading of the National Health Service Bill on 30 April 1946. The Opposition have resiled from what was promised then. They have no policies. Bevan took on the challenges, which the Opposition are not prepared to do. That is why the House should reject the Opposition's motion.

*Question put,* That the original words stand part of the Question:—

*The House divided:* Ayes 308, Noes 320.

**Division No. 144]** **[9.59 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Coventry NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A J
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Rt Hon Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Cabom, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D N
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomery)*
Chidgey, David
Chisholm, Malcolm
Church, Judith
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge Hl)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gorst, Sir John
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Hendron, Dr Joe
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hodge, Margaret
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley North)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Sheffld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McCrea, The Reverend William
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
MacShane, Denis
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll & Bute)*
Milburn, Alan

Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon Alfred *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon John *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Mike *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, Bill
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pearson, Ian
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, Rt Hon John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Chris *(Is'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smyth, The Reverend Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Timms, Stephen
Tipping, Paddy
Touhig, Don
Trimble, David
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

**Tellers for the Ayes:**
**Mrs. Barbara Roche and Mr. Jim Dowd.**

**NOES**

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Mole V)*
Baker, Nicholas *(North Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brown, M *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs Angela
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ru'cliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swinton)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Sir Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'lre)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Delvin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Rt Hon Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eggar, Rt Hon Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Rt Hon Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grant, Sir A *(SW Cambs)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archibald
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Rt Hon Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes, Robert G *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Sir Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Sir Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John

Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(NW Hants)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Rt Hon Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Scott, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

**Tellers for the Noes:**
**Mr. David Lightbown and Mr. Sydney Chapman.**

*Question accordingly negatived.*

*Question,* That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments):—*

*The House divided:* Ayes 319, Noes 302.

**Division No. 145]** **[10.17 pm**

**AYES**

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Mole V)*
Baker, Nicholas *(North Dorset)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brown, M *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs Angela
Bruce, Ian *(Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ru'cliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Sir Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Rt Hon Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eggar, Rt Hon Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Rt Hon Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grant, Sir A *(SW Cambs)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archibald
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Rt Hon Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*

Hughes, Robert G *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Sir Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Sir Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(NW Hants)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Rt Hon Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Scott, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

**Tellers for the Ayes:**
**Dr. Liam Fox and**
**Mr. Sydney Chapman.**

**NOES**

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A J
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Rt Hon Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D N
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomery)*
Chidgey, David
Chisholm, Malcolm
Church, Judith
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick

Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Hendron, Dr Joe
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hodge, Margaret
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley North)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McCrea, The Reverend William
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
MacShane, Denis
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll & Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon Alfred *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon John *(Aberavon)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Mike *(N Wkshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, Bill
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pearson, Ian
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, Rt Hon John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Chris *(Is'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Timms, Stephen
Tipping, Paddy
Touhig, Don
Trimble, David
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

**Tellers for the Noes:**
**Mrs. Barbara Roche and Mr. Jim Dowd.**

*Question accordingly agreed to.*

MADAM SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House noting that the problems of London's health service have been the subject of at least 20 reports in the last 80 years, all of which have come to broadly similar conclusions, believes that a better service for patients lies in implementing decisions and not a further review; commends the Government for its record in investing in modern hospitals, first class specialist centres and primary care and for its determination to take necessary decisions in the long term interest of the Capital's health service and the people of London; and calls on the Government to ensure that the decisions are now carefully carried forward taking due account of concerns that they should be properly paced so that patients continue to benefit from new and better services before old ones close.

## STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

### AGRICULTURE

*Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),*

That the Farm and Conservation Grant (Variation) Scheme 1995 (S.I., 1995, No. 890), dated 23rd March 1995, a copy of which was laid before this House on 28th March, be approved.—[*Mr. Bates.*]

*Question agreed to.*

## National Health Service (Wakefield)

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Bates.]*

10.32 pm

**Mr. David Hinchliffe** (Wakefield): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise serious concerns about the future direction of health provision in the Wakefield metropolitan district—concerns that I know are shared by my hon. Friends the Members for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright) and for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien). I know that they hope to catch your eye later, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

At the centre of those concerns is the fear that Wakefield Healthcare, the health authority purchaser, is considering a strategy that could result in the closure of either Pinderfields general hospital, Wakefield, or Pontefract general infirmary—or, indeed, both. Such is the level of public concern that I feel that the Government must be made aware of local feeling in the Wakefield district, and made to address their own responsibilities for the future health care of our constituents.

I make that specific point because I believe that the direct consequences of the Government's health policies are at the root of proposals that could totally undermine existing services. In short, the internal market is not working in Wakefield district. To try to make it work, Wakefield Healthcare is contemplating options for change that could result in cuts in service provision that are unacceptable to my constituents and to those of my hon. Friends.

Before I set out in detail my concerns, I want to make it clear that, although most of my constituents use Pinderfields hospital in Wakefield, I have no desire for that hospital to be sustained and developed at the expense of Pontefract general infirmary. My personal agenda—and I believe that of yourself, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and my hon. Friends—is to ensure that the future of both hospitals is secured. Both are popular, well used and major employers in a region that has recently suffered more than most from job losses.

Under the provisions of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990, for the past two years Wakefield Healthcare has been the major purchaser of health care in Wakefield district. Under the Government's health changes, that body is responsible for strategic planning of health care, and for determining its overall direction.

The three major providers in the region are the two trusts based at Pinderfields and Pontefract hospitals, and the Wakefield and Pontefract Community Health NHS trust. It would not be unfair to the health authority to say that, from the outset, it would have been preferred the establishment of one single trust, covering acute provision and based primarily in Wakefield and Pontefract. Indeed, the authority has proposed the amalgamation of the Pinderfields and Pontefract trusts—an option, as you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is strongly resisted locally, because real fears exist that it would lead to the rationalisation of services and a serious loss of provision.

In recent years, my constituents in particular have seen significant closure programmes, and they simply no longer trust local health managers' assurances. Through the House of Commons Library, I have calculated that, between 1979 and the last general election, more than 1,000 hospital beds have been lost in hospitals serving my constituents in Wakefield. They have good reason, therefore, not to trust assurances given in the local health service.

As you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will recall, we lost Snapethorpe hospital after being given assurances of alternative provisions which came to nothing. During consultation on the closure of County hospital in Wakefield, we were promised purpose-built geriatric provision on the Pinderfields site. It never happened.

More recently, during consultation on the closure of Manygates maternity hospital in Wakefield, where I, my son and my daughter were born, we were promised a purpose-built maternity unit on the Pinderfields site. That never happened either, so when new proposals emerge under the title of "Reconfiguring Hospital Services", my constituents and those of my hon. Friends know what to expect.

I learned of the proposals in a conversation with the chairman of Wakefield Healthcare, Mr. Brian Hayward, on the evening of Monday 6 March. I was left in no doubt that serious consideration was being given to the closure of both Pinderfields hospital and Pontefract general infirmary on the basis of building a new hospital somewhere between the two. He confirmed his statement on the following day, when we had a further conversation over the telephone.

On Friday 10 March, the *Wakefield Express* weekly newspaper reported Wakefield Healthcare's chief executive, Mr. Keith Salisbury, as stating that discussions about the idea of a new hospital were only "tentative", and that there was no question of closing Pinderfields. On that same day, however, I was telephoned by Mr. Roy Cusworth, chairman of Pinderfields hospital NHS trust, who, along with his chief executive, Mr. Peter Ward, had that week been made aware of the possible closure of Pinderfields.

Bearing in mind the fact that that trust had only recently published revised proposals for a major redevelopment of the hospital, and that it had been given approval to seek private financing for the project, the trust chairman was understandably incensed at suggestions of the hospital's closure. I know that he discussed his concerns at the time with the chairman of the Northern and Yorkshire regional health authority, Mr. John Greetham.

On the following Wednesday, 15 March, the chair, vice-chair and chief executive of Wakefield Healthcare met you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, my hon. Friend the Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright) and myself at the House of Commons. We discussed in some detail the issues facing the authority. I was alarmed to be told that any decisions about investment in new hospital provision at Pinderfields, Pontefract or on a new site would be a matter for the private investors under the private finance initiative. I would welcome the Minister's comments on that specific point.

I gained the clear impression that, regardless of the proposed development at Pinderfields or other options that might be suggested by the Pontefract trust or the health authority itself, the central determinant would be the choice of those investing private capital. I know that it was not just me who gained that impression. The minute

of the Pontefract and District community health council meeting, held on 10 April, recorded your view, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The minutes state:

"Mr. Lofthouse said in his opinion, the issue would be totally influenced by private capitalists investing monies. At the end of the day, these people were looking for returns on their monies and this would be the biggest consideration."

I recognise that Wakefield Healthcare has been landed with an extremely difficult task in implementing Government policy in the Wakefield district. The extent of those difficulties is made clear in its health strategy document, which I saw for the first time only yesterday. That document itemises various changes that have a bearing on the future plans of every health purchaser, including changes in professional practice, shorter hospital stays, day surgery and moves towards primary care.

In its specific policies for hospital provision in the Wakefield area, it makes particular reference to the reduction in junior doctors' hours, shorter training and the specific funding problems affecting Wakefield as a result of the Government's new allocation formula.

The Minister will recall that I previously raised the allocation formula with him in another Adjournment debate. As he knows, the formula assumes that Wakefield is overfunded by 4.9 per cent, or £7 million at current levels. The health strategy document states:

"It is therefore likely that development funds will be scarce during the strategic period and that there will be a continued need for redeployment of resources."

As well as serious resourcing difficulties, the other key element affecting Wakefield's health care strategy is that it has one of the highest concentrations of general practitioner fundholders in the country. Fundholders now cover 75 per cent. of the district's population, and by next April the health authy will be a minority purchaser.

We have to ask, how on earth can a health authy, supposedly in the context of public consultation, be expected to develop a strategy as a purchaser when, in future, the main purchasers will be groups of fundholders whose only tentative link to accountability is to the regional office of the national health service executive. If we throw in the fact that Wakefield has five practices with 55,000 patients moving to total fundholding, is it any wonder that, to the objective observer, the planning of health provision in Wakefield appears to be degenerating into total chaos?

The health authority's four options for the future pattern of provision are all, for various reasons, unacceptable. The first option of no change is dismissed by the health authy itself. The second option of redistribution of specialisms between Pinderfields and Pontefract means constituents being forced to travel miles for care that is currently provided within their own localities. There is concern that specialties cannot be traded between sites because of the need to reflect best clinical practice, to ensure linkages with other specialties and to make the best use of equipment and support facilities.

The third option, of providing most emergency work at one hospital and most elective work at the other, would mean massive duplication of equipment and support facilities. More importantly—as you well know, Mr. Deputy Speaker—it would result in serious delays in treating accident and emergency cases, and could cost lives.

My hon. Friends the Members for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright) and for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien), and you yourself, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are probably more aware of the exact time it takes to travel by road between Pontefract and Wakefield, but I would say that 25 minutes is a reasonable estimate. In that period, people moving to either end of the district could die. That is what happens if access to accident and emergency units is delayed in the way in which it may well be as a result of the suggestions put forward by the health authority.

The fourth option is establishing a new hospital. The report that I have seen does not make it clear whether or not that would entail closing existing hospitals. It will inevitably result in the loss of many existing services at previous sites, inconvenience to patients and—of course—serious job losses.

The strategy document accepts that Pinderfields trust has been given permission by the regional health authority to explore the potential for private financial support for the redevelopment. While the trust states that it

"would not wish to adversely affect this private finance bid",

it would surely come as no surprise to Wakefield Healthcare to learn that potential private investors attracted by Pinderfields may be somewhat put off to be made aware of the options in the strategy document, and their implications.

A backdrop to the Wakefield health pantomime is the current review of health provision in Leeds. Wakefield Healthcare's inability to defend regional neurosurgery provision at Pinderfields from the raid by the United Leeds Hospitals trust does not exactly inspire confidence in its willingness to rebuff the further predicted incursions in the direction of other regional specialisms within Wakefield.

Pinderfields—as you well know, Mr. Deputy Speaker—has a proud record in many of its specialisms, with its burns unit, plastic surgery provision, spinal injuries and younger disabled units, and other services which are very widely respected. But the Government's internal market means that such key services can be grabbed and moved elsewhere. There is a scarcely hidden agenda within the Leeds review, of shifting further specialisms to Leeds and leaving Wakefield's hospitals as mere satellites.

That is not acceptable from my point of view, or from the point of view of my hon. Friends who represent the Wakefield district. It is not acceptable that the Government can avoid responsibility for the problems which are now being faced within Wakefield. It is not acceptable for the Minister to give me parliamentary answers of the kind he has given to me on this issue in the past few weeks.

I shall quote two of those answers before I end my speech. On 16 march, I asked whether the Secretary of State

"will seek reports regarding the future of Pinderfields hospital, Wakefield from (a) the chair of the Yorkshire and Northern health region, (b) the chair of the Wakefield health authority and (c) the chair of the Pinderfields trust; and if she will make a statement."

The answer from the Minister was:

"This is a matter for Wakefield Healthcare. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. Brian Hayward, chairman of Wakefield Healthcare, for details."—[*Official Report*, 16 March 1995; Vol. 256, c. *707*.]

Having spoken to that gentleman, I am none the wiser

*[Mr. David Hinchliffe]*

On 27 March, I asked the Secretary of State

"if she will make it her policy to ensure that Pinderfields hospital, Wakefield, remains open as a district general hospital maintaining regional specialisms."

The Minister answered:

"This is a matter for the Northern and Yorkshire regional health authority. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. John Greetham CBE, chairman of the authority, for details."—[*Official Report*, 27 March 1995; Vol. 257, c. 422.]

In conclusion, I would say that this is a matter for the Government. I want answers to some questions tonight.

10.47 pm

**Mr. Derek Enright** (Hemsworth): May I pay tribute to all that you have done, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the campaign in the area? I would not have time tonight to reveal all you have done. I wish to make some short but extremely important points. My constituency has seen Southmoor in Hemsworth slimmed down, Ackton hospital in Featherstone closed down and Warde Aldam in South Hensall pulled down. That is what we have found from the internal market in my constituency.

On top of that, the threat to Pontefract general infirmary is simply not acceptable. My hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) has just referred to the time it takes to get to Pinderfields in terms of accident and emergency units. Attention has not been paid to the difficulties in transport at certain hours. I myself have spent over an hour getting into the centre of Wakefield in a small car. That is not unusual in the rush hour when such accidents can occur.

The internal market has been a disaster for our area. The only body that has benefited from it is a doctor's practice, which made a record surplus, enabling the doctor to extend his surgery in a totally unnecessary fashion. Yet that is the main capital expenditure that Wakefield has had. If that is an example of the internal market, we have had quite enough of it, and the Minister must take control and do some indicative planning.

10.50 pm

**Mr. William O'Brien** (Normanton): It is not long since the Minister came to our area and agreed to close the accident and emergency unit and other facilities at the Castleford and Normanton hospital, which serves a large part of my constituency. People in the Ossett area of my constituency would have to travel tremendous distances if the Pinderfields hospital is somehow to be moved to the east of Wakefield. There are strong rumours that that could happen.

I want the Minister to be honest and open with us tonight, and say what future he envisages for hospital provision in Wakefield. There is strong opposition to the proposal to close Pinderfields hospital and Pontefract general infirmary with a view to building a smaller hospital in the area. People in the metropolitan area of Wakefield will not accept that proposal.

There are now strong rumours that the hospice services could face difficulties because general practitioners in the area will, in due course, be responsible for purchasing services at the hospices in Pontefract and Wakefield. People are tremendously concerned about the future of hospice services, because the Government are contemplating the purchase of such services in the future.

Will the Minister assure us that constant provision will be made for people who need hospice services in Wakefield and Pontefract? I hope that he will assure us that no changes will be made to hospital provision in Wakefield, and that the hospices in the area will continue to receive the same resources to maintain their services in both towns. That is important to our area, and we look to the Minister for assurances on that provision.

10.52 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tom Sackville):** I am grateful for an opportunity to reply to this debate. I am aware of the strength of concern felt by the constituents of the hon. Members for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe), for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright) and for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien), as well as your constituents, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You and I have corresponded about local health services and had more than one meeting at Pontefract hospital and elsewhere to discuss those matters.

The question of resources has come up a couple of times in the debate.

It has been alleged in a previous Adjournment debate, and it was mentioned in this debate, that the Wakefield health authority is over target, and it has been said that therefore there will be cuts. I must tell the House that, in the current year, there is an increase of 4.4 per cent., and that means a real increase in resources.

Although, compared with some other districts, Wakefield may be above the target, it is unlikely, given that there is likely to be a continuation of real increases in health resources in the years to come, that any over-target district health authority will lose resources in real terms as a result of redistribution. Fears raised about future resources should therefore not be exaggerated.

There are other reasons why Wakefield health authority, like many others, must consider the future pattern, not only of hospital acute services, but of all health services throughout its district. Obviously, resources come into it, but the pattern of health services is evolving. The hon. Member for Wakefield mentioned some of the reasons—the growth in day surgery and the increase in the numbers of patients who will be seen in primary care settings rather than in hospitals in future. All sorts of changes are taking place that will make it necessary to reconsider the number of acute beds and acute hospitals in each region and each district.

It goes without saying, therefore, that it would be irresponsible of Wakefield or any other health authority not to look very hard at the pattern that it envisages for the future, looking 10, 20 or 30 years ahead and making proposals now.

I also refer to what the hon. Member for Normanton (Mr. O'Brien) said about hospice services. I will inquire into that matter. There has been anxiety that, because the central funding of hospices and palliative care has been devolved to districts, there would be a detrimental effect on local hospices. There is no reason why that should happen, but I will inquire into the matter for the hon. Gentleman, because the resources that are provided

centrally by the Department of Health for hospices have increased sharply in the past, and I am sure that we intend to continue to support that sector, in which the country has such a splendid record.

On the subject of Wakefield Healthcare's health strategy document, which lies at the heart of the anxieties of the hon. Member for Wakefield, consultation on a proposed health strategy in Wakefield between July and October 1994 was extensive. It covered the needs of the whole population of the Wakefield metropolitan district council area. About 1,000 copies of the proposals were issued, and a further 125,000 copies of the summary were printed and issued through the free press or distributed at various local events.

Representatives of Wakefield Healthcare spoke to several local groups about the strategy, as well as holding meetings of the three local national health service trusts and two community health councils in Wakefield and Pontefract. It is worth emphasising that the Wakefield health strategy discusses the way in which services in the Wakefield area may be shaped in the next five years and considers the need for any shift to primary care that may be appropriate.

Wakefield Healthcare set up a sub-group to consider responses. The group included three local general practitioners, the director of public health and two directors of Wakefield Healthcare. The two community health councils were invited to contribute, especially about the proposed move of some services to the primary care sector.

The sub-group looked at four main options, which were: option 1, to do nothing; option 2, to redistribute specialities over two hospital sites; option 3, to identify one hospital to undertake elective care and one for emergency care; and option 4, to build a new hospital on a new site. Those options were discussed informally with local Members of Parliament and other representatives. Since then, the focus of attention has understandably been on one section of that strategy—the possible reconfiguration of acute services.

It has been stressed a number of times that the discussions are at an early stage. I am therefore unable to give any definitive idea to hon. Members as to which option will finally be recommended. I understand that the proposed health strategy will be published later in May. Wakefield health authority also proposes to take a series of steps—for example, to explore the cost benefit and feasibility of each of the four options with local hospitals and, in particular, the three trusts.

Services that support any future configuration will be reviewed. There will be further consultation on the proposed way ahead with hospital clinicians, GPs, community health councils and all other local organisations. I understand that that is likely to begin in the summer. It will be followed by confirmation of the preferred option for the future configuration of services for the district.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** Will the Minister specifically address the problem of fundholding that I raised? Will he consider the difficulty in which the authority will find itself next year as a minority purchaser?

**Mr. Sackville:** It goes without saying that the health authority will continue to be a major force and a major purchaser of acute services for all fundholding GPs in the district. It would be wrong to suppose that it is not possible to plan health services where there is a wide distribution of fundholding.

I reject the hon. Member's description of health planning descending into chaos, or words to that effect. The consultation exercise must be gone through, because health services are evolving. It will be for the health authority, principally, to decide what option should be recommended. Those matters must be planned coolly and rationally, because they affect the pattern of health services for decades to come.

I assure hon. Members that the outcome of the deliberations will mean a better and more modern health service for the entire district for generations to come.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Adjourned accordingly at two minutes past Eleven o'clock.*

# House of Commons

*Thursday 11 May 1995*

*The House met at half-past Two o'clock*

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

## PRIVATE BUSINESS

CITY OF WESTMINSTER BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
*Order for consideration, as amended, read.*
*To be considered on Thursday 18 May*

# Oral Answers to Questions

## TREASURY

### Domestic Economy

1. **Mr. Gapes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on prospects for improvement in the state of the domestic economy. [22225]

**The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Kenneth Clarke):** The outlook remains highly favourable. The economy grew by nearly 4 per cent. last year and inflation was at its lowest level for over 30 years.

**Mr. Gapes:** If the outlook is really favourable, why did we have a £10.5 billion deficit on trade in 1994, why has the pound devalued by 35 per cent. since the Prime Minister took us into the exchange rate mechanism at DM2.95 and why is the weakness of our economy being reflected by a weakening of our currency, day by day?

**Mr. Clarke:** First, our trade performance continues to improve. The hon. Gentleman will know that this morning's trade figures show exports up by 9 per cent. in volume compared with a year ago and he will also know that the current account last year was extremely favourable despite the strong recovery. We even showed a surplus in our dealings with Japan last year. The hon. Gentleman's sudden concern about the exchange rate is very reassuring. He will be glad to know that we are strengthening against the deutschmark today.

**Mr. John Townend:** Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that the unemployed, small business, the construction industry, many of the service industries and much of the retail trade are relieved and grateful that he did not put up interest rates? Will he confirm that the grounds for that decision were purely economic and based on factors such as low wage inflation, the flat housing market and the quarterly survey by the Forum of Private Business showing that for the past four quarters the rate of growth had gone down? Will he confirm that if inflationary pressures rise he would have no hesitation in putting up interest rates?

**Mr. Clarke:** I confirm all those things. As my hon. Friend says, small businesses in particular want stability and certainty in the Government's policy. We are pursuing steady recovery with low inflation and every policy action that I take is aimed at that conclusion. I congratulate my hon. Friend on expressing an opinion on the decision that I took on Friday. Nobody in the Labour party has yet seemed to have formed an opinion one way or the other as to whether the decision was welcome.

**Mr. Sheldon:** Is the Chancellor of the Exchequer aware that no Government can allow the Governor of the Bank of England to determine economic policy in this country? The Government, of whatever party, must determine such matters, and they are judged right or wrong by the events as they unfold.

**Mr. Clarke:** I do not know why the right hon. Gentleman should tell me that. His own shadow Chancellor needs to be told that. Everybody will discover in six weeks' time in the usual way the opinion of the Governor and myself at last week's meeting. Everyone can see from the Governor's speech this morning that the Governor of the Bank of England and I are entirely agreed on the object of policy and we believe that that policy has been delivered successfully.

The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), the shadow Chancellor, has now got the monthly monetary report and the Governor's own inflation report; he has seen the judgment of the markets; he has heard every financial commentator give an opinion and he has heard my hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend) give an opinion, yet he has no opinion at all on the subject one way or the other. The shadow Chancellor does not even cast a shadow one way or the other. He would just wait to see what the Governor told him to do.

**Mr. Renton:** Has my right hon. and learned Friend had time in his busy morning to read an article in today's edition of *The Times* headed

"Three cheers for Clarke, the best post-Jenkins Chancellor"?

Is he aware that Mr. Kaletsky, the author of the article, congratulates him on being his own man in standing up against the City and the Bank of England and their pressure for higher interest rates?

Is my right hon. and learned Friend also aware that many of his hon. Friends would disagree with Mr. Kaletsky's conclusion that he should become President of the European Commission, but expect him to remain as an extremely successful Chancellor for many years, leading and guiding the improvement in the economy of the country?

**Mr. Clarke:** I read the article and I am, of course, grateful to Mr. Kaletsky and to my right hon. Friend. I have no aspirations to be President of the European Commission.

**Mr. Budgen:** Yet.

**Mr. Clarke:** I am unlikely to be put forward for that post by my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen).

One thing with which all my critics have always agreed, as much as my supporters, is that I endeavour to be my own man. I take my own decisions. I am extremely candid

and clear about why I have taken those decisions. I am faced by an opponent who has no opinions and no decision-taking capacity on the subject.

**Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** Does the Chancellor agree with the Governor of the Bank of England and the chief economist of the Bank of England that interest rates will have to rise sooner rather than later? Is he still serious about keeping inflation under 2.5 per cent. by the end of this Parliament?

**Mr. Clarke:** I shall set interest rates, as I have always said I shall set them, after discussion with the Governor of the Bank of England, to pursue the objective upon which we are both agreed of keeping inflation between the 1 to 4 per cent. range and getting it under the lower half by the end of the Parliament. I shall continue to do that.

If the hon. Gentleman wants to know the opinion of the Governor on that, he will know that he made a speech in Aberdeen this morning in which he said:

"Notwithstanding the current excitements, I am convinced we remain in better economic shape than we have been for a very long time. The Chancellor has made it clear that the macro economic policies that have brought us to this point remain in place—and it is important, from my perspective, that they should."

I agree with that. I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman agrees with that, and I have not a clue whether the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East agrees.

**Mr. Gordon Brown:** Will the Chancellor answer the question put to him just a minute ago? The Bank of England said this morning that under the present policies, the Government's last remaining target—an inflation target of 2.5 per cent. by the end of the Parliament—will not be met. *[Interruption.]* That is what the Bank of England said this morning. Will the Chancellor now reaffirm in clear words that the inflation target of 2.5 per cent. by the end of the Parliament will not be changed?

**Mr. Clarke:** I have just said that it will not be changed. There has been no change of policy. What the Bank of England's inflation report this morning says is that it has revised its forecast up slightly because of recent changes in the exchange rate. It stresses that the certainties about inflation are vague—it does not give a spot figure. We will continue to set interest rates to achieve the target that I have given. That is a clear policy.

If the hon. Gentleman believes that forecasts of inflation are cast in concrete, he is mistaken. If he wants a guide to policy, he should not just look at one forecast of inflation, but look at the commitment of the Government and the Governor to low inflation and the fact that, in the past 19 months, we have produced the best inflation record the country has seen since 1961.

**Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** May I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on his courage last week in not putting up interest rates? He knows my views about the importance to the country of the manufacturing and construction industries. Does he accept that a real guide to the true economic strength of the country is the strength of construction and manufacturing? If they are doing well, all the other indicators are, in my view, irrelevant. Would he comment on that?

**Mr. Clarke:** Much as I would love to agree with every word of my hon. Friend, in the end he underestimates the complexity of delivering sustained recovery with low inflation, which has eluded the country ever since the war. We now have the best prospects of achieving that. The present recovery is being led by manufacturing and our export performance with the outside world is particularly encouraging, because we are rebalancing the economy in a much healthier fashion.

I am glad that my hon. Friend considers my decision courageous, because it is exactly the same type of decision as those I have taken for the past two years. We are pursuing a consistent policy to give manufacturers and others the stability that they require and the certainty they need about the way in which the Government intend to take economic policy.

### Mortgage Interest Relief at Source

2. **Mr. Fraser:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy that an unmarried couple owning a house and who have jointly borrowed £60,000 or more are not penalised in terms of MIRAS. [22226]

**The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Sir George Young):** Since 1 August 1988, mortgage interest relief has been restricted to a loan of £30,000 per residence, regardless of the number or marital status of the people buying together. That rule ensures that married and unmarried couples are treated in the same way. Unmarried people buying a house together before 1 August 1988 can keep any higher level of relief to which they were entitled, as long as their circumstances do not change. However, if they move, replace the loan, or marry, their limit for relief falls to £30,000 between them.

**Mr. Fraser:** Does that mean that, if an unmarried couple who bought their house before 1988 get married, the Government put a tax on marriage and legitimacy? Surely that is not Government policy. Is it not about time that the law was changed, so that those cohabitees who do marry do not suffer a tax penalty?

**Sir George Young:** The law was changed to remove exactly the injustice to which the hon. Gentleman refers, because, under the old rules, an unmarried couple could obtain as much as twice the amount of mortgage interest tax relief as a married couple. That was the injustice that we removed in 1988. We also gave transitional relief to those who had bought under the old rules, until such time as their circumstances changed.

If we were to do what I believe that the hon. Gentleman wants us to do, we would simply continue to entrench an injustice that Conservative Members, at least, find unacceptable.

**Mr. Devlin:** Surely it is right that married couples should be in no worse a position than unmarried couples, and therefore the restriction that took place in 1988 was perfectly just and well thought out. In fact, we should have done it earlier.

**Sir George Young:** I agree with my hon. Friend, and I find it perverse that a decision that we took in 1988, which I am not aware was criticised by Opposition Members at the time, has now come in for rather belated criticism from the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser).

## Privatisation

3. **Mr. Clifton-Brown:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the effect on the Exchequer in the last financial year of industries privatised since 1979; and what was their effect in 1979. [22227]

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke:** In 1979, nationalised industries cost the taxpayer about £50 million each week. In 1994-95, privatised companies paid about £55 million each week into the Exchequer.

**Mr. Clifton-Brown:** Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that those figures demonstrate the outstanding success of our privatisation policy, which has been widely recognised throughout the world by such regimes as North Korea and Cuba? Does he not find it strange that the last bastion of socialism, the new Labour party, has yet to appreciate the effects of privatisation?

**Mr. Clarke:** I agree with my hon. Friend. The Labour party held a special conference to try to pretend that it no longer agreed with the North Korean communists, but only a week later, when the first privatisation proposition came before Parliament, it was opposing it again and backing the keeping of nuclear fuel in state-owned hands, in spite of the fact that privatisation will bring a dramatic fall in electricity prices in England, Scotland and, indeed, all parts of the United Kingdom.

**Ms Armstrong:** Does the Chancellor recognise that the Treasury will make about £5 billion from the two privatisations that the Government are pursuing—£5 billion for tax cuts before the general election, which will have to be paid for by the British people to the tune of £10 billion in the costs of decommissioning power stations and subsidies to British Rail? What sort of bargain is that for the taxpayer?

**Mr. Clarke:** The hon. Lady has at least worked out that the proposal to privatise the nuclear electricity industry has nothing to do with tax cuts. It has to do with putting in place commercial disciplines and private sector management, which those in the industry want, and reducing the costs of electricity to consumers throughout the country. That is the purpose of the privatisation.

If it has become the policy of the Labour party to seek tax cuts—I have no knowledge of the direction in which it intends to go in that regard—tax cuts depend on tight control of public spending and the reduction of public borrowing. If the Labour party ever gets round to having an economic policy, perhaps Labour Members will give us the benefit of some of their opinions about some of those elements—tax, spending and borrowing.

**Mr. Alan Howarth:** Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the capacity of the privatised and other industries to invest and deliver wealth to the nation, jobs to our people and revenue to the Exchequer depends critically upon the level of interest rates? Does he agree that choking off investment every time we fear a tremor of inflation is a formula for the progressive debilitation of our economy?

**Mr. Clarke:** That is right, but I am sure that my hon. Friend also agrees that inflation has killed off fast recovery and poses the biggest threat to the confidence that people must feel before they will invest in increasing industrial capacity. That is why we make the judgments we do on the basis of a clear inflation target. That is why we look at the real economy, as well as the monetary aggregates and the exchange rate, when we make those decisions. I believe—judging from his speech today, the Governor believes it also—that we have been remarkably successful in getting the right balance over the past two or three years.

## Drugs

4. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what currently available figures he has for the quantities and value of drugs seized at United Kingdom airports over any conveniently available recent 12-month period. [22228]

**The Paymaster General (Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory):** During 1994 Customs and Excise seized 47 tonnes of cannabis and four tonnes of cocaine, heroin and synthetic drugs, with a total street value of some £551 million. Some 10½ per cent. by value of these drugs were seized at airports.

**Mr. Dalyell:** May I ask a question of which I have given Treasury officials notice? Could they put in the Library an account of what a senior Customs official, Mr. Philip Connolly—whom I do not criticise in any way—said to senior Pan American airways security officers Michael Jones and Jim Berwick about controlled drugs delivery? Will the Minister consider asking a senior Treasury official to watch carefully the two-hour film about Lockerbie which is to be screened tonight on Channel 4? The significance or otherwise of my question will then become apparent.

**Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** The hon. Gentleman did me the courtesy of giving me notice of his intention to raise the Lockerbie case. A British Customs officer did give information to an American court about the Lockerbie bombing, and confirmed that bag-switching is a technique used by drug smuggling organisations. However, there is no evidence that that was the way in which the bomb was put on the flight in question; nor were British Customs involved in any controlled delivery of drugs on that ill-fated flight. I shall ask my officials to watch the programme to be screened this evening, and I will supply any additional information to the hon. Gentleman.

**Mr. Allason:** Will my hon. Friend agree to look at the Treasury's policy relating to foreign rewards paid to British police forces for drugs seizures overseas? Is he aware that the Drug Enforcement Administration is prepared to pay very large sums in return for information that leads to drug seizures abroad? Under Treasury rules, all of that money must go directly to the Exchequer whereas, under DEA rules, the money must go directly to the drug squads involved. Therefore, Britain is denying itself large sums of money that would be available from the United States in the fight against drugs.

**Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** I am not sure whether my hon. Friend is quite correct in what he says. The proceeds of international drugs seizures can be recycled to drug enforcement agencies, including those in this country. I will obtain the details and write to my hon. Friend about the matter.

**Financial Supervision**

5. **Mr. Corbett:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what new proposals he is considering on banking and financial supervision. [22229]

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke:** Banking and financial supervision is a large subject. Therefore, with respect, this is a rather wide question. At any one time a variety of issues will be under consideration. For example, my hon. Friend the Minister of State announced at the beginning of the year the outcome of our review of the Building Societies Act 1986 and, more recently, the Treasury released a consultation paper on open-ended investment companies with proposals for legislation to allow their formation in the United Kingdom.

**Mr. Corbett:** I thank the Chancellor for that answer. Does he accept that, following the rip-off of people on modest incomes who were persuaded to buy private pensions and mortgage-linked endowment policies, there is a need for more effective regulation of banking and financial services; or will those people simply become more casualties of the Government's indifference?

**Mr. Clarke:** The response to the problems that have arisen with personal pensions shows how successful we are in having the right regulatory regime in place, and how responsive the authorities have been in making sure that individuals who might have suffered loss as a result of mis-selling are considered. We are going through a huge process of identifying any persons who may have experienced mis-selling of personal pensions and of making sure that those responsible put such people in the position in which they should be. Similarly, we already cover endowment-based mortgages under the Financial Services Act 1986.

Strong arrangements are in place to provide consumer protection. It is not the right response to demand yet another quango and more Acts of Parliament—particularly when the present arrangements in this country work so much better than anything almost anywhere in the world.

**Mr. Budgen:** As banking is affected by monetary policy, I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on not having increased interest rates, for two reasons. At long last, he understands the advantages of floating exchange rates, and he demonstrates that, under our constitution, the Chancellor of the Exchequer must be responsible for monetary policy and that it cannot be delegated to an independent Bank of England or, worst of all, to an independent central European bank.

**Mr. Clarke:** My hon. Friend and I have always agreed on rather more of economic policy than he ever cares to concede. I do know that one has either a floating exchange rate or a fixed exchange rate, and that one should not have a target exchange rate when it is floating. The exchange rate is something that one takes into account when setting monetary policy. My hon. Friend gave an impeccable statement of the constitutional position when he said that the Chancellor is responsible for monetary policy in this country but acts on the advice of the Governor of the Bank of England. I have made matters more open than ever before, by allowing the Bank of England to publish an unedited inflation report and by publishing the minutes of meetings after six weeks, to give it more credibility with people, such as my hon. Friend and myself, who want to see such decisions taken on economic grounds.

I congratulate my hon. Friend on yet again giving an opinion one way or the other about last week's decision. The hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) had one chance to do so, but he went on about something that I have already forgotten. The hon. Gentleman failed absolutely to be the first member of the Labour party to say whether he would have increased interest rates, taken them down or done anything at all last Friday.

**Rev. Martin Smyth:** While I welcome the Chancellor's statement that he does not want any more quangos, does he agree that it is time that the Treasury relaxed some restrictions on friendly societies, to allow them to give more benefits to their members, whom they have been looking after well for years?

**Mr. Clarke:** That matter has been reviewed from time to time and we consider representations on the subject. We think that there is some scope for change.

**Mr. Brazier:** Surely the most important purpose of banking supervision is to keep an eye on the overall level of lending and the money supply. Will my right hon. and learned Friend take it from me that many on this side of the House believe that when broad money is in the lower half of our range, 80 per cent. of bank lending to small businesses is secured on domestic property and there is still strong anecdotal evidence of tightness of credit in the economy, my right hon. and learned Friend is absolutely right to resist pressure to raise interest rates?

**Mr. Clarke:** My hon. Friend is right. Broad money as well as narrow money, which has remained above its target range for some time, are two of the items that one considers. I repeat my congratulations to my hon. Friend. He gave an opinion that may provoke a response, but the entire Labour party is sitting there like a stuffed duck because Labour Members do not know whether they are meant to get up and say that they agree or do not agree with last Friday, because the man in front of them has not yet made up his mind. He is incapable of making up his mind on any aspect of economic policy.

**Mr. Darling:** I ask the Chancellor to return to the original question. Does he accept that pensions being mis-sold or people being given inappropriate advice about endowment mortgages is due in no small part to the fact that we live under a regime of self-regulation, where the public interest takes second place to the trade interest? Does he accept that public confidence in the industry will not be restored until the nonsense of self-regulation is brought to an end?

**Mr. Clarke:** With the greatest respect, I do not agree that that case is made out at all. The statutory framework that we have is set under the Financial Service Act 1986. There is no evidence that making the whole regime statutory would improve a system in which the self-regulatory bodies contain a large number of people with detailed experience of how the industry works.

Of course, we have to look at the serious problems that lie behind the mis-selling of so many personal pensions. I am confident that the new Personal Investment Authority will improve matters and exercise tighter

supervision. I am delighted that more than 5,000 firms have applied to join that authority, and I am sure they will strive to obtain higher standards in future.

### Public Borrowing

6. **Dr. Spink:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the reduction in public borrowing (a) in the United Kingdom and (b) in other EU countries in the last year. [22230]

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke:** The public sector borrowing requirement for 1994-95, was £10 billion lower than in the year before. Government borrowing is falling faster, here in the United Kingdom, than in any other major European economy.

With permission Madam Speaker, I will publish the detailed information requested on other countries in the *Official Report*.

**Dr. Spink:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that paying taxes is fundamental to keeping down the public sector borrowing requirement and to the financial well-being of everyone in the country? Will he therefore join me in deploring the fact that some of the newly elected Labour councillors on Castle Point borough council are facing committal proceedings—

**Madam Speaker:** Order. That is hardly the responsibility of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Much as I am devoted to Castle Point, I doubt whether the Chancellor has any responsibility for activities there.

**Dr. Spink:** What would happen to the public sector borrowing requirement if, like the Labour councillors in Castle Point, the rest of us refused to pay our local taxes, as has Jim David of Canvey Island on Castle Point?

**Mr. Clarke:** I believe that all citizens should pay the taxes to which they are legally liable, properly and on time. I also believe that taxation should be kept down to the lowest possible level consistent with the public spending required to provide good high-quality services.

**Mr. Enright:** Will the Chancellor compare and contrast the differing definitions of public sector borrowing in different countries in the European Union?

**Mr. Clarke:** It is a perfectly fair point, and it is done as part of monitoring the convergence criteria under present arrangements within the European Union. Attempts are made to compare like with like across the European Union. We follow international definitions. The conventions that we follow are recognised to be in line with the best of international practice, and the PSBR figures that we produce are trustworthy and reliable, and show what remarkably good progress we are making in getting our public sector borrowing under control, in contrast to the total failure of the last Labour Government to deal with the public sector borrowing problems following recession when the International Monetary Fund eventually had to sort them out.

**Mr. Tim Smith:** Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree with the European Monetary Institute that continuous efforts towards reducing—[HON. MEMBERS: "Reading."] I am quoting. *[Interruption.]* I am paraphrasing. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that continuous efforts towards public sector borrowing are needed if we are to have a growing economy and improve the supply side? Is it not the case that most European Governments are overspent and over-borrowed and that only the British Government have a clear programme for reducing spending and borrowing as a percentage of national income?

**Mr. Clarke:** My hon. Friend is right. There is a growing international consensus that in current circumstances a low level of fiscal deficits, low inflation and low debt to gross domestic product ratios are essential to keep an economy on course. That is wholly consistent with the policy of the Conservative party over the years. All the members of the European Union are committed to achieving those goals. As I have just said, Britain is reaching them rather faster than any of the major economies on the continent.

*Following is the table:*

*Changes in general government financial deficit (GGFD) (as a percentage of GDP)*

| | *[1]Year-on-year change in GGFD/GDP ratio* |
|---|---|
| Austria | +0.3 |
| Belgium | –1.1 |
| Denmark | –0.1 |
| Finland | –2.5 |
| France | –0.2 |
| Germany | –0.4 |
| Greece | +0.8 |
| Ireland | –0.1 |
| Italy | +0.1 |
| Luxembourg | –0.2 |
| Netherlands | +0.5 |
| Portugal | –1.0 |
| Spain | –0.5 |
| Sweden | –1.6 |
| United Kingdom | –1.9 |

[1] 1994–95 compared with 1993–94 for United Kingdom 1994 compared with 1993 for other EU.

*Sources:* United Kingdom, 1 March 1995 excessive deficits return; other EU, European Commission forecasts, European Economy November 1994.

### Public Sector Borrowing Requirement

7. **Mr. Connarty:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest estimate of the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement for the present Budget year; and if he will make a statement. [22231]

8. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give his latest estimate of the public sector borrowing requirement. [22232]

**The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Jonathan Aitken):** The Budget forecast of the PSBR for 1995-96 was £21½ billion.

**Mr. Connarty:** Given that the Bank of England is now calling into doubt the Chancellor's inflation forecast, and that the PSBR outturn was £1.3 billion more in 1994-95 than predicted, how can the British people be asked to have confidence in the Chancellor's predictions for the economy when he is turning into the Michael Fish of Budget forecasting?

**Mr. Aitken:** The hon. Gentleman is in danger of misrepresenting the views of the Governor, who clearly said today that we are

"in better economic shape than we have been for a very long time."

I hope that the hon. Gentleman will at least acknowledge that the public sector borrowing requirement has been on a good downward trend for some time. It fell by £10 billion last year and is forecast to fall by £14 billion this year.

**Mr. Griffiths:** Does the Minister accept that the PSBR is being reduced only by imposing more Tory taxes? The latest—the transport tax, which is to take effect from 1 January next year and will add £10 each to some 12 million holidays—is the 21st Tory tax. Why does the Minister not listen to businesses and ensure that those proposals are withdrawn?

**Mr. Aitken:** The hon. Gentleman ignores the fact that one of the main reasons why the PSBR is falling at a satisfactory rate is that my right hon. and learned Friend and I managed to reduce public spending over the survey period by no less than £29 billion. That is a major contribution to bringing down the PSBR.

**Mr. Nicholls:** What representations has my right hon. Friend had from the Opposition about the need to reduce public expenditure—bearing in mind that their claim to be elected is now based on the fact that they can be safely elected because they are Tories as well?

**Mr. Aitken:** My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor referred a few moments ago to Opposition Front Benchers as a lot of silent stuffed ducks. That strange characteristic is repeated exactly in the case of my hon. Friend's point about public spending. The Opposition will not tell us whether they want lower public borrowing or what they intend to do about public spending. Away from the Dispatch Box, however, they are still the big-spending party: currently promising to spend more money on income support for 16 and 17-year-olds, on regional assemblies and development agencies, on an emergency employment programme, and on a defence conversion agency, more money from capital receipts, and more money on a growth strategy for Europe. All that adds up to much more borrowing and higher spending. It is about time that they stopped being stuffed ducks and admitted it.

**Mr. Batiste:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that reductions in public borrowing create resources which can be made available for other purposes? As the Opposition have called repeatedly for increased spending on education and hospitals, can my right hon. Friend think of any recent occasion when they have offered support for creating the economic circumstances that will make that possible?

**Mr. Aitken:** I can think of no such example. I have listened to wave after wave of sound bite waffle emanating from the Opposition, and I am longing to hear a single constructive fact or proposal from them. They have indeed been well named the stuffed duck Front Bench by my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor.

**Mr. Mike O'Brien:** Will the Minister confirm that, in 1994, public borrowing as a percentage of gross domestic product was higher in the United Kingdom than in any other European Union country, with the exception of Italy, Greece and Spain? Will he further confirm that that imprudent situation was dealt with only by the Government imposing on the typical British family extra taxes of £800, in breach of the Government's election promises?

**Mr. Aitken:** The hon. Gentleman draws a one-sided and erroneous picture. In fact, the British Government's borrowing is falling faster than that of any other major European country. Among European Union countries, we have the lowest general Government debt-to-GDP ratio, with the exception of Luxembourg. So our record on public borrowing is good by European standards.

### Economic Performance

9. **Mr. Spring:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from the editor of the *Financial Times* about Britain's economic performance and that of the rest of Europe. [22233]

**Mr. Aitken:** My right hon. and learned Friend and I are regular readers of the *Financial Times*.

**Mr. Spring:** Is my right hon. Friend aware that, according to the latest *Financial Times* survey of Europe's 500 largest companies, the United Kingdom accounts for no fewer than 16 of the top 25 by profitability, and no fewer than 11 of that 25 by market capitalisation? Does my right hon. Friend agree that that is yet another sign of the growing resilience and success of British business?

**Mr. Aitken:** Yes, I agree with my hon. Friend. He is right to draw attention to that upbeat *Financial Times* survey, which showed that British companies are riding high in the European league table of successful businesses. In addition to the figures to which he has drawn attention in terms of profitability and market capitalisation, six British companies are in the *Financial Times* top 10, 21 in the top 50 and no fewer than 179 in the top 500. That is three times more than the German score and twice that of the French. The figures show that British companies are exporting more and growing faster round the world than most of our European Union competitors.

**Mr. Tony Banks:** That is all very interesting, but why does Britain rank only ninth among the 15 European Union countries in terms of per capita gross domestic product? If there is such a great success story for Britain, why are Italy and France ranked above us in the per capita GDP league?

**Mr. Aitken:** In fact, Britain is out-performing most European countries. We have the fastest growing economy in Europe right now. Last year, it grew two and half times faster than Germany's, one and a half times faster than the French, and eight times faster than the Japanese. Unemployment is falling by 1,000 a day. There is plenty of good news by any international comparison standard. Opposition Members should recognise that.

### Spare Capacity

10. **Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of spare capacity in the economy. [22235]

**Sir George Young:** There is no unique measure of spare capacity in the economy. But recent data and evidence from business surveys all point to strong growth in business investment this year.

The UK is experiencing a healthy well-balanced recovery, with falling unemployment and underlying inflation below 3 per cent. The Government's policies will ensure that economic growth is sustained with low inflation.

**Sir Thomas Arnold:** With three quarters of the economy outside manufacturing, will my right hon. Friend acknowledge that inflationary pressures remain subdued? Is it not ludicrous, therefore, to be talking about a boom-bust cycle and an interest rate increase to counter the threat of overheating?

**Sir George Young:** My hon. Friend is right. The Confederation of British Industry survey of capacity covered about a quarter of the economy. As for the other three quarters, to which my hon. Friend has referred, there are sectors in which there is clearly spare capacity, such as housing, construction and retail. We must examine the entire picture when we come to decisions.

**Ms Primarolo:** How does the Financial Secretary reconcile the Government's continued claim that the economy is in great shape with the Bank of England's view, as published today, that capacity constraints in manufacturing industry are prompting inflationary pressures? What do the Government intend to do about that conflict of interpretation?

**Sir George Young:** As the hon. Lady will have heard, the Governor has said that the economy is in better shape than it has been for many years. I do not agree, therefore, with the analysis that she has outlined. Investors would like to know where the Labour party stands on taxing, spending and borrowing. We have had no responses from Opposition Members for three quarters of an hour on key economic questions.

### Retail Prices Index

11. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are his estimates for the retail prices index one month, six months and one year hence; and if he will make a statement. [22236]

**Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** The November Financial Statement and Budget Report forecast that underlying inflation would be 2½ per cent. both in the fourth quarter of 1995 and in the second quarter of 1996.

**Mr. Fabricant:** Whatever the absolute rate of inflation, does my hon. Friend agree that the relative inflation rate—that is, our rate of inflation against those of competing nations—is of equal importance? Does my hon. Friend further agree that it is the relative rate of inflation which defines our competitiveness and our ability to create jobs? That being so, what was the relative rate of inflation under the Labour Government when the average rate was 15.9 per cent., and what in my hon. Friend's estimation would be our current rate of inflation if we had committed £13 billion more public expenditure this year, as the Labour party had promised in 1992?

**Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The underlying inflation rate of 2.6 per cent. for the year to April is lower than the comparable average for the EC as a whole. Between 1974 and 1979, the Labour party's inflation record was not only disastrous at home but extremely poor by international standards. All the clause IV waffle that we hear is less eloquent than the fact that Labour cannot be trusted on inflation. The real lesson that the British people have learnt is never to give it another opportunity.

## PRIME MINISTER

### Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 11 May. [22255]

**The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major):** This morning, I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

**Mr. Prentice:** Today, with the publication of the Nolan report, will the Prime Minister take full personal responsibility for the tide of sleaze that has engulfed his Government? Will he now admit that it is quite wrong for Ministers to move seamlessly from the Cabinet room to the boardroom, lining their pockets in the process?

**The Prime Minister:** I invite the hon. Gentleman to read the report before he comments on it. He will then see what Lord Nolan has to say about the great majority of men and women in British public life, their standards and their ethics, and he may just regret the way in which he and some of his hon. Friends have attempted, time after time, to issue general smears about specific matters.

Q2. **Dame Jill Knight:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 11 May. [22256]

**The Prime Minister:** I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

**Dame Jill Knight:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that the size and scale of public rejoicing on Monday stoutly reaffirmed the love that the British people have for this country? They were waving Union Jacks, not tatty-looking red roses. Is it not appropriate to remind people that Labour's devolution policy would split this country more irrevocably and fundamentally than all Hitler's armies could possibly have done?

**The Prime Minister:** As my hon. Friend makes clear, last week's celebrations were a remarkable occasion. They struck a perfect balance between commemoration and celebration, and I think that they brought a great deal of pleasure to the many men and women whom we were honouring for their service during the war so many years ago. I believe that they also showed that the sentiments that unite us as a nation are far stronger than those sometimes presented as though to disunite us. That is very healthy for the nation as a whole: it is an enormous strength for this country—a strength that should not be put at risk by misguided policy.

**Mr. Blair:** People of all political persuasions enjoyed VE day, and I do not think that political capital should be made out of it. Now—is 2.5 per cent. still the Prime Minister's inflation target?

**The Prime Minister:** We set out our inflation target some time ago. It is between 1 and 4 per cent., and in the lower half of that range by the end of this Parliament. It remains the same.

**Mr. Blair:** Does the Prime Minister then disagree with the Bank of England, which says that he will not meet that target?

**The Prime Minister:** The Bank of England has made it perfectly clear that it supports the policy that we are carrying out. If the right hon. Gentleman had read the speech by the Governor this morning—I will quote it to him if he wishes, for clearly he has not—he would have seen that the Governor makes very clear the importance of maintaining a strong control of inflation, saying that in recent years we have been very successful in that.

I remind the right hon. Gentleman that the nearest that the last Labour Government got to low inflation was 8.4 per cent. on rigged figures over one quarter. We have had inflation below 3 per cent. for more than a year.

**Mr. Blair:** I do not think that the Government are in any position to talk of rigged figures—no, indeed. The Bank of England clearly does not agree that the Prime Minister will meet his target. How does a public rift between the Government and the Bank of England do anything other than damage the credibility of the economy? Does not the fact that rises in interest rates are even being contemplated at the moment, when for millions of people they have barely moved out of recession, show the fundamental weakness of the economy that the Government have never addressed?

**The Prime Minister:** I do not think that the Governor of the Bank of England thinks that it is a weak economy, as the right hon. Gentleman will see if he reads the Governor's speech. The reality is that, as usual, the right hon. Gentleman and his colleagues are playing both sides of the same policy. They criticise when interest rates go up and they criticise when interest rates do not go up. They simply do not know what they wish to do, except, whatever happens, to criticise it and to make short-term party political capital out of it; they do not give a fig for the long-term health of the British economy.

**Mr. Churchill:** Is it not clear that the French people—*[Interruption.]*

**Madam Speaker:** Order. The hon. Gentleman must be heard in the House.

**Mr. Churchill:** Is it not clear that the French people have no greater love of socialism than the British? Will my right hon. Friend neglect no opportunity to expose the fact that, behind the innocent cherubic face that the Labour party seeks to present to the world, is a party which, every time it has been in government, has wrecked the economy, destroyed business confidence and boosted taxes to very high levels on ordinary working people?

**The Prime Minister:** My hon. Friend is quite right about that. There is one matter in which Labour Governments have always been consistent: unemployment has always gone up, interest rates have gone up, taxes have gone up and prospects have gone down.

Q3. **Mr. Simpson:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 11 May. [22257]

**The Prime Minister:** I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Simpson:** Can the Prime Minister confirm that, under the regulations governing the national lottery, the fingers crossed symbol is the property of the Secretary of State for National Heritage? Does he appreciate that it has come to represent the symbol of his party in that it is all that remains of his strategy for winning local government elections, his guarantee of emergency care beds for the people of London and his own prospects of leading the Conservative party towards its next electoral catastrophe?

**The Prime Minister:** During the past four years we have taken decisions that are in the long-term economic and social interests of Britain. Many of them have been difficult and unpopular, but as a result we have inflation lower than we have seen for a long time, unemployment falling faster than anywhere else in Europe, investment showing that British industry is growing and exports which show that in eight or nine months out of the past 14 we broke new records. When did the Labour party ever preside over an economic circumstance remotely like that?

**Mr. Thurnham:** When my right hon. Friend next meets Mr. Chirac, will he congratulate him on his presidential victory and remind him how much better it is to be outside the social charter, especially now that unemployment in France is 50 per cent. higher than in this country?

**The Prime Minister:** I agree with my hon. Friend about the problems of the social chapter. There is no doubt that right across the rest of the European Union the social chapter costs jobs. Here it does not cost jobs, because we are not part of it. I can reaffirm to the House that neither in the short term nor in the long term will we become part of it.

Q4. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 11 May. [22258]

**The Prime Minister:** I refer the right hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Beith:** Is the Prime Minister aware of the announcement within the last hour that the Asea Brown Boveri train building works at York is to close with the loss of 700 jobs? Does he recognise that that is a demonstration of the dreadful chaos of rail privatisation and that investment in the railway industry is grinding to a halt as a result? What chance is there that our rail system will have investment and that trains will be built in this country at all?

**The Prime Minister:** Of course I know of the job losses at ABB, and I very much regret them. But privatisation is no more responsible for those job losses than it is for an outbreak of measles. The right hon. Gentleman is simply wrong to blame privatisation. It was the Government's private finance initiative which gave ABB the opportunity to bid for contracts such as the

Northern line, the Heathrow express rail link and the Jubilee line extension. Unfortunately, ABB did not win any of those contracts, and that is the problem.

**Sir Michael Neubert:** As unemployment has come down by 632,000 since the last general election, is continuing to come down by an average of 1,000 per day and is below the European Union average, would it not be absolute folly to reverse that progress by adopting a national minimum wage? If such a policy is to be offered to the British people, do they not have an unchallengeable entitlement to know the level at which it will be set and how many hundreds of thousands of jobs will be lost as a result?

**The Prime Minister:** There seems to be some dispute among Opposition Members about whether they should proceed with the minimum wage and what its level would be. Certainly, despite their clarity that they wish to have a minimum wage, they are less clear about the level at which they would set it, and I find that rather odd. The right hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) is keen enough to tell us that he would enter a single currency in many years' time, which is a major decision, yet he cannot tell us, even perhaps two years ahead, were he to win the election, what he would do on a relatively minor decision such as the level of the minimum wage.

The reality is that the Opposition know that a minimum wage would cost jobs and they know that if we knew its level we would be able to calculate that loss. On any reasonable assumption, more than 750,000 people would lose their jobs as a result of Labour dogma.

Q5. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 11 May. [22260]

**The Prime Minister:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Flynn:** Is the Prime Minister not shocked by the news that the number of children who were hit and killed by road vehicles increased last year by a staggering 28 per cent.? Is he aware that that was mainly because the fronts of some vehicles are designed for appearance and not safety, with the addition of rigid bull bars which concentrate and multiply the force of accidents at the level of a child's head? Does he agree with his Ministers that those bars are useless, macho fashion accessories, and will he move swiftly today to avoid future tragedies by banning these deadly bully bars from all public roads?

**The Prime Minister:** I was not aware of the statistics that the hon. Gentleman mentions or the reason that he ascribes to them. However, in view of what he says I shall certainly ask my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport to examine the matter and, having done so, provide me with his advice. If the hon. Gentleman's statistics are right, it is of course regrettable. I am glad to say that, overall, the position on road accidents is improving, and I hope that that will continue.

**Mr. Hendry:** Is my right hon. Friend aware of the positive reaction in my constituency and throughout the country to yesterday's White Paper, "Tackling Drugs Together", which contains the most comprehensive anti-drugs strategy of any Government? Does he agree that the key message to young people should be that all drugs are wrong? Does he also agree that any move by the House to legalise even soft drugs should be rejected because it would fundamentally undermine that message?

**The Prime Minister:** I strongly agree with my hon. Friend on the question of drugs, and I take the view that the legalisation even of soft drugs would be a very substantial mistake, not least because soft drugs are so often the route towards people seeking to experiment with harder drugs. It is very unwise for people to experiment with any drugs and we have no intention of legalising them. The proposals that we set out yesterday on tackling drugs have been very widely welcomed. Many experts have commented not only on the comprehensive nature of our proposals, but on the fact that no country in western Europe now has such a comprehensive plan in hand to deal with the desperate problem of drugs.

Q6. **Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 11 May. [22261]

**The Prime Minister:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

**Mr. Mackinlay:** Who is to blame for, and what is the cause of, all the negative equity that is blighting hundreds of thousands of households and families? What will be the consequences for the economy and for business if negative equity continues to grow, and what does the Prime Minister intend to do about it?

**The Prime Minister:** Fortunately, the amount of negative equity is now half the level it was at its peak and it continues to fall. Clearly, while there is negative equity, it is acting as a drag on the housing market. The more the economy grows, the more unemployment falls, and the more confidence begins to return, the sooner we shall begin to see the complete elimination of negative equity. When that occurs, it will be a very welcome development.

## Post Office

3.30 pm

**Madam Speaker:** We now come to a statement by the President of the Board of Trade. *[Interruption.]* Will hon. Members who are leaving please do so quickly?

**The President of the Board of Trade and Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Michael Heseltine):** Madam Speaker, I wish to make a statement on the Post Office and to set out a number of changes that I intend to introduce to the present arrangements.

In the case of Post Office Counters, we agreed last year that it should offer the services of the network of 20,000 post offices—19,000 of which are run as private businesses—to a wider range of clients. That policy has led to a number of new services being offered or trialled at post offices, such as bureaux de change services, travel insurance and the free payment of gas bills. Post offices are also the largest retailer of national lottery tickets. I welcome those developments, which should help strengthen the network of post offices, not least those in rural areas.

I intend a number of changes to the financial regime of the Post Office, notably the external financing limit, or EFL. Although no responsible Government could undertake to ring-fence the Post Office entirely from the pressures on public spending, I am prepared to agree that in future we shall aim to set the EFL at about half the Post Office's forecast post-tax profit. I hope to make progress in that direction this autumn.

I intend to adopt a more strategic corporate plan process and to remove the formal limit on the Post Office's capital expenditure, together with the associated detailed scrutiny of investment projects in its core business. Those measures should enable the Post Office to plough back the benefits of additional efficiency into improving services for customers.

I now turn to the board's wish that the Royal Mail should be able to extend its activities into adjacent markets. Although I am prepared to consider such requests, I have told the Post Office that in doing so, I would expect a considerable increase in the use of the private financing initiative, in respect of both activities in associated fields and increased opportunities for the private sector to participate in its existing activities.

There are certain provisos on my willingness to make those changes. First, there must be real pressure on the efficiency of the Post Office. I am about to appoint consultants to carry out a performance review of the Post Office's operations.

Secondly, the Post Office must generate the funds for any expansion from increased efficiency and not from increased prices. I therefore greatly welcome today's announcement by the Royal Mail that it intends to maintain its current domestic tariffs until at least March 1996. That means that there will have been only one domestic tariff increase in the first four years of this Parliament, a considerable achievement.

Finally, I have told the board that I would expect all new developments to be separately accounted and, where practical, to be developed through separately established Companies Act subsidiaries. As a first step towards that, I have agreed with the board that it will convert the main operating units of the Post Office into Companies Act companies.

Before concluding, I would like to thank the Trade and Industry Select Committee for its very helpful reports on these issues. My Department is replying in detail to its most recent report today.

The measures that I have announced today represent a *pragmatic and balanced package* for the Post Office and its customers. I commend them to the House.

**Dr. John Cunningham** (Copeland): I have the pleasure of giving a general welcome to the statement, especially as it is a modest step. These are modest measures in the direction of policies for the Post Office for which we in the Opposition have argued for several years. The whole House should congratulate the management and all employees of the Post Office on the announcement today that it will hold steady prices for the Royal Mail. That is a significant achievement—an achievement in public ownership and in the public sector—by everyone engaged in the Post Office.

The President of the Board of Trade has just announced that, yet again, he is to appoint consultants to examine the Post Office. Is he aware that we know that he has already spent £2 million on engaging consultants to examine the Post Office? Even after that expenditure, funded by the taxpayer, he has come forward with only a very modest response to our requests, the requests of the management of the Post Office and the requests of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry for change.

What is new about the right hon. Gentleman's announcement that, in future, he will aim to set the external financing limit at about half the Post Office's forecast taxed profit? That is the status quo; it is not a change. It is recognition of the circumstances that exist in the Post Office and of its arrangements with the Government today. That is no change—no step forward.

Why has the right hon. Gentleman apparently abandoned his previous commitment, although he said that it was his lifetime ambition to set the rest of his political career in the track of privatising the Post Office? Is the reason that he knows that there is no majority in the House for the privatisation of the Post Office? Does he recognise that he is, again, admitting defeat on his principal personal objective?

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that, a year ago, he told the House, the Select Committee on Trade and Industry and everyone in the Post Office that he was not in favour of the private financing initiative for Post Office operations? Why has it taken him a year to change his mind? Why, during that time, did the Government insist that the Post Office, which wanted to lease trains for the mail, should spend £50 million in cash to buy those trains when, using the initiative announced today, it could have saved that expenditure for other capital investment?

Is not the reality that the Government could now, without legislation, remove altogether the current capital expenditure limits on the Post Office, relax even further the scrutiny of specific projects, free altogether the Post Office management from the DTI's nit-picking interference, give new freedoms to Post Office Counters Ltd., end the closure of Crown post offices, and get off their backside and get on with the private financing initiative about which the right hon. Gentleman has prevaricated for so long?

Is not it also clear that the only way in which the public, who overwhelmingly oppose privatisation of the Post Office, can ensure the defeat of that privatisation is to ensure the defeat of this Government?

**Mr. Heseltine:** The right hon. Gentleman may not have read the Green Paper that we published a year ago as carefully as I would have hoped, because, far from rejecting the option of the PFI, I said on page 15, paragraph 9:

"The relaxations discussed in paragraph 6, together with use of joint ventures under the PFI, would be of some value to Royal Mail."

That is not what one would call rejecting the option, then or now. It is quite clear that we looked at that option. It was not the best option, but it was an option and it was the one that, in the light of the circumstances, we have decided to pursue.

I cannot accept for one moment that there is an argument for halting the closure or conversion of Crown post offices into sub-post offices. The fact is that the record of achieving that has been considerable. The benefits and efficiency that have been achieved have followed as a consequence. It is a matter for a management decision of the Post Office. It is continuing to do that, because it believes that it is in the interests of its customers.

The right hon. Gentleman is also wrong about the issue of the EFL. The fact is that it is true today that it is closer to 50 per cent., but it has been moving in that direction from higher percentages. It is because we want to try to discuss arrangements with the management of the Post Office for a more stable relationship in the future that we have attempted to quantify, within the constraints that I have set out, what that EFL might look for in the future.

I was again amazed that the right hon. Gentleman should be surprised that in taking this step to help the Post Office, I should be appointing consultants to look at the books within the Post Office.

**Dr. John Cunningham:** Again.

**Mr. Heseltine:** It is not a question of again. Does not the right hon. Gentleman realise that business is a dynamic process? If I am going to have to look at a whole range of judgments on the efficiency of the Post Office, it is no use relying on evidence that was given to me a year or two years ago. I have to see facts as they are and as they will be in the future.

That is a classic example of why the right hon. Gentleman and his party have never understood the weaknesses and frailties of nationalisation. They rely on the advice of the managers, as interpreted by their officials. I want to make sure that I have got someone inside the Post Office who can see the books and advise me about what is actually happening.

The right hon. Gentleman accuses the Government of attempting to adopt the policies of the Labour party. That, if I may say so, is rich. The party that says that it has abandoned nationalisation, is trying to dissociate itself from the trade unions and trying to repeal clause IV now somehow suggests that we are pursuing its policies. Exactly the opposite is the case.

When the right hon. Gentleman says that I have abandoned a lifetime's ambition to privatise the Post Office, let me say that I recognise that I failed to persuade some 10 of my Conservative colleagues to move to a privatisation process. I got a lot closer to persuading 100 per cent. of my party to back privatisation than the right hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) got in persuading his party to abandon clause IV.

What the right hon. Gentleman's opposition to our proposals revealed clearly is that he still hankers after a public sector solution. It is all very well to talk about getting rid of clause IV, but when the chips are down, that is where the Labour party's hearts and minds belong.

**Mr. Patrick McLoughlin** (West Derbyshire): May I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement on his general relaxation of some of the rules relating to the Post Office? Could he say a little more about the future of sub-post offices? Already, some 19,000 post offices are in private ownership. There is a great feeling that they ought to be given far more commercial freedom to take on far more activities. The only way that rural post offices will survive is by giving them greater business opportunities. Will my right hon. Friend say a little more on that matter?

**Mr. Heseltine:** I am delighted to respond as positively as I can to my hon. Friend. Let me tell the House what I have said to the officials in my Department. I asked them whether we have turned down any requests for further freedoms. I am not aware of any requests from Post Office Counters that we have turned down. If any right hon. or hon. Member has some ideas that we should pursue to free up the rural and urban post offices, I shall be immensely sympathetic. To the best of my knowledge, they have the freedom to move in an increasingly wide area and I do not know of any additional freedoms for which we have been asked.

**Mr. Nick Harvey** (North Devon): I welcome the right hon. Gentleman's statement and his conversion to the policy that he has outlined, albeit a little belated and perhaps rather grudging. Will he go one step further and remove the uncertainty that might arise from his decision to change the operating companies into Companies Act companies? Will he confirm that it is not his intention to come back later to try to privatise any of those companies? Will he tell the House why he intends to continue to levy an EFL of 50 per cent. of post-tax profit, which is clearly a higher financial burden on the Post Office than on any of its rivals or on any other private sector companies?

The right hon. Gentleman said that he intends to appoint consultants. In a previous answer, he sounded as if he intended to keep them on virtually a permanent basis. Does not the Post Office's achievement, which he rightly applauded, of managing to keep mail prices down, provide some evidence of good performance? Is it really necessary to use consultants on a permanent basis and at further expense?

The post office network has been referred to. Will the right hon. Gentleman tell the House whether the Government will invest in smart card technology in the rural post office network?

**Mr. Heseltine:** The hon. Gentleman will know that the automation of sub-post offices is now the subject of advanced negotiation. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security has negotiated an eight-year contract for the benefit arrangements. There will be a much more sophisticated facility available through a PFI arrangement to the sub-post offices, and I welcome that as one of the developments of their potential.

*[Mr. Heseltine]*

On the appointment of consultants, if I am to be expected to make judgments about how the business can expand, it is important that I have full access to the facts and figures. The hon. Gentleman made the assumption that keeping prices down has followed as a result of continued efficiencies. That is perfectly true. The question that has to be asked is how such large efficiencies were achieved after years in which the business had been a public corporation. That is a hard question, and there is only one answer: it had not been efficiently run in previous years. I am determined to do all that I reasonably can to change the climate. The 50 per cent. EFL is a matter of judgment and negotiation. I must have regard to the interests of the public Exchequer in securing a reasonable return by way of the dividend that the EFL represents.

**Several hon. Members** *rose—*

**Madam Speaker:** Order. It appears that every time there is a ministerial statement I have to remind hon. Members to be brisk with their questions and to put only one question to the Secretary of State. As hon. Members know, at statement time I try to call every hon. Member who wants to intervene. That is unprecedented; my predecessors have not done so. I cannot go on doing that if hon. Members make statements and ask several questions. I shall have to look at statement time again if hon. Members do not co-operate with the Chair. One question each, please.

**Mr. Jim Lester** (Broxtowe): As one of the 10—although I think that there were rather more than that—who opposed the privatisation of the Post Office, I congratulate my right hon. Friend on a pragmatic and coherent policy statement that will carry with it many people, particularly the general public who were worried about potential changes. It gives the Post Office and Post Office Counters a way forward that we can all support.

**Mr. Heseltine:** I am most grateful to my hon. Friend. I know that he was one of the small number of my colleagues who disagreed with my views. I do not believe that this is the ultimate and correct solution. It is the politically possible solution, and that is a step on from where we were. When I see what is happening across the world and the potential for the Royal Mail if we had turned it into a first-class international trading company, I must say that I do not bring this proposal to the House believing that we have ended the job.

**Mr. Richard Caborn** (Sheffield, Central): I thank the President of the Board of Trade for his response to the Select Committee. I hope that we can get that into the public domain as quickly as possible, because there is a great deal of information there in which hon. Members will be interested. May I also thank him for at least agreeing that the status quo is unacceptable and that there should be some move towards commercialisation, even within the public sector borrowing requirement? How are the Royal Mail and Parcel Force to use the PFI if the private sector is not to be a major stakeholder?

**Mr. Heseltine:** The whole point of the PFI is to bring the private sector into partnership with the public sector. My announcement today merely indicates the ways in which we can move in that direction.

**Sir Dudley Smith** (Warwick and Leamington): While many of us have complained from time to time that a letter has been unexpectedly delayed by the postal services, is it not a fact that postal services in other advanced countries are a joke compared with our service, which is extremely efficient? Is my right hon. Friend aware that the postal service in this country has improved enormously in the past few years? Is he not wise and sensible to put the utmost pressure on it to keep that up?

**Mr. Heseltine:** I agree that the Royal Mail provides a very high quality of service. The standards have improved, and the returns that the Exchequer is achieving have improved. I take the view—this is where I disagree with some hon. Members—that I should build on a success where I see it and give it a wider opportunity. The Labour party, by and large, takes the view that it should be constrained and limited to ensure—[HON. MEMBERS: "We do not."] It is no use Labour Members saying that they do not. We all know what they did. Capital investment in the last five years of the previous Labour Government, in today's money terms, was less than half what it has been in the past five years of this Government.

In the last five years of the previous Labour Government, the Post Office lost £300 million. In the past five years, under this Conservative Government, it has made more than £1 billion. That is the real world. There is no point in Labour Members lecturing us about what they would or would not do. We know what they do when they get power and that is the best possible argument for keeping them where they are, without any power.

**Ms Kate Hoey** (Vauxhall): The President will be aware that the public will—generally—be very supportive of the small measures that he has announced today. The public, and hon. Members, will, however, want to know why it has taken three years—it could have been agreed three years ago—and £2 million of consultants' fees to reach a general agreement. Why has it taken that long?

**Mr. Heseltine:** Because I was investigating ways in which to make what I thought was the right step. To do that was a time-consuming business. It certainly took a proper period of time, and I make no apologies for that. What matters is not whether it took time to make the decision, but whether it adversely affected the Post Office in the meantime. One need only look at the results—the rising profitability—to realise that it has not affected the opportunities of the Post Office.

In real terms, we are talking not about nit-picking details, but about where the future of this great company will be among the increasingly sophisticated multi-media operations and world-class competitors of tomorrow. What the House will not face and has not faced is why American multinational companies should be free to come and trade in this country and take the business from our Royal Mail while we deny our Royal Mail the opportunity to fight on its own terms.

**Dr. Keith Hampson** (Leeds, North-West): Does my right hon. Friend accept that that is precisely the point? If Opposition Members had found that it was possible to commercialise the Post Office, they would have done it. Unless the shadow Chancellor allowed another Labour Government to pay absolutely no regard to the disciplines of public sector companies, we can now go only one way and free those companies as far as possible. The statement, welcome as it is, is inadequate in one essential

area. The companies should be totally free to raise the investment that they need when and how they need it in the private capital markets of the world. We should be privatising the Royal Mail. My right hon. Friend has not gone far enough.

**Mr. Heseltine:** I cannot in any way improve on what my hon. Friend has said. That is exactly my view. But from where we were, I have taken a step in the right direction.

**Mr. Peter Hain** (Neath): In welcoming the President's statement, may I ask him about its European implications? In considering adjacent markets, would he allow the Royal Mail and Parcel Force to engage in joint ventures with—possibly—private sector operators in Europe so that the British Post Office may conquer the European mail market, which is critical for the future? Will he also categorically resist any attempt which, as I understand, will be forthcoming from the European Commission, to impose VAT on postal services in view of Swedish entry? That seems to be absolutely vital for the future. Will he guarantee a minimum level of the national network for Post Office Counters?

**Mr. Heseltine:** The hon. Gentleman will appreciate that we are doing everything possible, and far more than any other Government have ever done, to enhance the potential for Post Office Counters and sub-post offices. I am extremely grateful to the National Federation of Sub-Postmasters, which has widely praised what the Government are doing. There is absolutely no doubt about support for our policy.

Were we to inject a statutory minimum number of post offices, that would involve a degree of prescription that is economically unrealistic. Why should we stop at rural post offices? One could think of an endless stream of desirable features of an economic society that one could underpin with a state guarantee. That is an unrealistic suggestion, and it merely reveals the difference in approach between Opposition Members and those on the Conservative Benches.

As to how we deal with the European opportunities, it flows from my statement that I shall discuss them with the Royal Mail and the Post Office. The position there is changing a great deal. As the House knows, the Germans and the Dutch are moving to a private sector solution for their mail. I am prepared to look at a PFI solution, but I shall take into account the two-way nature of such activity. There are significant operations within the Post Office that open themselves up to partnerships with the private sector. If I am expected to move in one direction by extending the opportunities, I shall expect the Royal Mail and the Post Office to do exactly the same with their activities.

**Mr. Hain:** What about VAT?

**Mr. Heseltine:** I have no reason to believe that there is any threat to the present status.

**Sir Peter Emery** (Honiton): I thank my right hon. Friend for reinforcing support for sub-postmasters and sub-postmistresses throughout the country. He has asked for suggestions to assist them. May I therefore suggest that, if all sub-postmasters and sub-postmistresses were able to issue motor vehicle licences, which they have wanted to do for a long time, that would be greatly welcomed by people living in country districts? That would be a great step forward.

**Mr. Heseltine:** That is a constructive suggestion from my right hon. Friend. I keep asking for advice as to whether there are any outstanding requests. I am not aware of any, but I shall certainly consider that made by my right hon. Friend and write to him.

**Mr. Dennis Skinner** (Bolsover): Is the Minister aware that he is in a very odd constitutional position? Three times already this afternoon he has bemoaned the fact that he cannot get through the policy he really wanted—that is, to privatise the Post Office. He has then come along and attacked people because they have put forward alternatives, saying, "Well, it is not really my policy. It is second best." Why does he not do the decent constitutional thing, as he did over Westland, and resign and launch his counter-attack from the Back Benches?

**Mr. Heseltine:** Of all the hon. Members to ask that question. Am I now to understand that, within the Labour party, the hon. Gentleman is against trade unions and against nationalisation, and is now abandoning his support for the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament? If he is not, why has he not resigned from the Labour party?

**Mr. Edward Leigh** (Gainsborough and Horncastle): Given the parliamentary arithmetic, most people would accept that my right hon. Friend's statement represents a sensible, pragmatic way forward. Can he explain whether there is any logic in the state owning a commercial organisation to which he has given full commercial freedom? There is no logic and no point in that.

**Mr. Heseltine:** There is no logic. My hon. Friend is entitled to great praise for the remarkable work that he did when he was with me at the Department of Trade and Industry to explore the very ideas under discussion. As he will know, logic is not always the controlling influence in politics.

**Mr. Tam Dalyell** (Linlithgow): The right hon. Gentleman's blast to Bolsover will not quite do. Is the President aware that, in his candid, truthful, revealing and much-to-the-point answer to his hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester), he said, "Look, I don't believe in this policy."? Is it old-fashioned to think that when he and I came to the House all those years ago, a Secretary of State in such a position would have asked the Prime Minister at least for transfer to other work? Is it not a serious matter when a Secretary of State quite obviously does not believe in the policies that he is putting forward?

**Mr. Heseltine:** If my blast at the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) will not do, I am happy to have a blast at the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell).

I have made the position absolutely clear. The policy that I am putting forward today is better than the policy that is in place at the moment. It is not as good as the policy that I tried to persuade the House to adopt a year or so ago, but it will enhance the position of the Royal Mail in an acceptable way.

*[Mr. Heseltine]*

There is a better way, a better tomorrow, but if I am to be told that one must stay where one is unless one can reach the ultimate objective, I have to tell you, Madam Speaker, that none of us would ever move anywhere in politics if we did that.

**Mr. Barry Porter** (Wirral, South): I am grateful for my right hon. Friend's remarks in relation to the Trade and Industry Select Committee, but I would not want him to think that some of us who are members of that Committee believe that what we proposed was the ultimate objective. I think that he has made that clear. Nevertheless I would like him to reiterate that we are making the best of a job—[HON. MEMBERS: "Bad job."]—and it is a pragmatic solution as we stand, but I hope that that is not the end of it and that there may well be bluebirds over some cliffs of somewhere or other.

**Madam Speaker:** Order. I was waiting for a question in all that. In fact it was a comment, and there was not a question. This is the time for questions on the statement. Perhaps the Secretary of State will make a stab at responding to that non-question.

**Mr. Heseltine:** I was about to burst into,

"We'll meet again—don't know where, don't know when",

but I welcome another trimmer in the art of politics, my hon. Friend.

**Mr. Peter L. Pike** (Burnley): Does the President of the Board of Trade agree that some of the commercial activities to which post offices cannot return are the services that were provided by Girobank, which the Post Office lost when it sold Girobank to the Alliance and Leicester building society against its will, and to which post offices are banned by the conditions of sale from returning?

**Mr. Heseltine:** That is an important issue. I know that discussions are going on—I am not sure what stage they have reached—with clearing banks about what facilities might be made available through the post office network. I do not have a specific statement to make on that subject, but there are interesting potentials out there.

**Mrs. Ann Winterton** (Congleton): May I congratulate my right hon. Friend on realising that politics is the art of the possible, and may I welcome the statement that he made today—not least on the new arrangements for the Royal Mail? Does he agree that those arrangements will further enhance the service that is given to the customer? He has already announced that the price is to remain as it is, and all my constituents will welcome that.

**Mr. Heseltine:** My hon. Friend is right. They will enhance, but they will not maximise. That is the difference between us.

**Mr. Brian Wilson** (Cunninghame, North): It is great to be discussing a public sector success story, but it is odd that, although the statement has been generally welcomed by Opposition Members, the President of the Board of Trade does not agree with the statement that he is making.

Will the President of the Board of Trade at least accept our gratitude for enunciating the new doctrine of permanent consultancy, whereby consultants report and he and his Department take a year to consider the report, by which time it is time for consultants to report again? It is a very lucrative doctrine for the consultancy industry.

Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that article 100(a) of the treaty of Rome will remain the only legal basis for any policies adopted regarding Post Office liberalisation in future? It is a very important matter at present. Does he also recognise that the policy of closing down Crown post offices is despised in hundreds of communities throughout the country? If he does not recognise that after the local elections, he certainly missed something. Anyone who has visited places where the local post office has been shoved into the back of a supermarket knows that everyone resents what has been done and wants to retain a Crown post office in the town centre.

Finally, does the right hon. Gentleman accept that what we are discussing today, above all, is a defeat of his ambition to privatise the Post Office? The only way to ensure that that defeat is maintained is to defeat the Tories.

**Mr. Heseltine:** I am not aware of any changes in the relationships that we have with the European Union with regard to the Post Office. If that position changed, I would of course inform the House.

I am very interested in what the hon. Gentleman has to say about the continued unease of constituents in places where Crown post offices have been converted to public post offices. Such a conversion has taken place where I live. I cannot remember when I last heard anyone talk about it.

The service is perfectly satisfactory. There are 19,000 sub-post offices. I do not receive letters of complaint. Our proposals have been warmly welcomed by the National Federation of Sub-Postmasters. As usual, the only people who are completely out of touch are Labour Members who have listened to what the unions have said about the matter. They are so ignorant about the situation that they do not know that 19,000 out of 20,000 post offices are already privately owned.

## Business of the House

4.4 pm

**Mrs. Ann Taylor** (Dewsbury): May I ask the Leader of the House for details of future business?

**The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton):** The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 15 MAY—Progress on remaining stages of the Gas Bill.

Motions on the conditional fee agreements order and the conditional fee agreements regulations.

TUESDAY 16 MAY—Conclusion of remaining stages of the Gas Bill.

WEDNESDAY 17 MAY—After the usual Wednesday morning Adjournment debates, Opposition Day (12th allotted day). Until about 7 o'clock there will be a debate entitled "The Further Erosion of Rail Services due to Privatisation" followed by a debate entitled "The Costs to the Country of Privatising the Nuclear Power Industry". Both debates will arise on Opposition motions.

THURSDAY 18 MAY—Debate on the report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life (the Nolan Committee) on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

FRIDAY 19 MAY—The House will not be sitting.

The House will also wish to know that European Standing Committee B will meet on Wednesday 17 May at 10.30 am to consider European Community document No. 4523/95, Relating to Energy Policy.

MONDAY 22 MAY—Progress on remaining stages of the Child Support Bill, to be brought to a conclusion on either Tuesday or Wednesday.

*[Wednesday 17 May:*

*European Standing Committee B—Relevant European Community documents: 4523/95 Energy Policy; Relevant European Legislation Committee Reports HC 70-ix (1994-95) and HC 70-xiv (1994-95). ]*

It may also be necessary to take some Government business on Thursday 25 May. The House may wish to be reminded that, subject to the progress of business, it is proposed that the House should rise for the spring Adjournment on Thursday 25 May until Tuesday 6 June.

**Mrs. Taylor:** I thank the Leader of the House for that statement, and I ask him to confirm that the Wednesday morning debate the week after next will take the form of a spring Adjournment debate.

As to next week's business, the House will be pleased that we are to have an early debate on the report of the Nolan committee. As the committee was set up by the Prime Minister, will the Prime Minister open that important debate? Will the Leader of the House confirm today that the Government will accept the main recommendations of the Nolan committee as a good starting point for rebuilding public confidence in our democratic system? Will the Leader of the House ensure that, following next week's debate, there will be an early opportunity to make the necessary changes so that we can implement the recommendations in the Nolan report within the time scale that the committee advised?

The House will have noted that next week the Opposition is again providing an opportunity to debate some of the issues that greatly concern the public. Given the widespread and deep public unease about privatisation by the back door without any further reference to Parliament, what steps will the Government take to gain the approval of the House before there are any more sell-offs of public assets?

What time will the Government allocate to discussing the disaster that is unfolding at York, where the hiatus in railway investment is causing serious problems? Those problems should not be dismissed, as the Prime Minister dismissed them today, as simply the equivalent of an outbreak of measles. There will be dramatic job losses in York and another indigenous British industry will go to the wall as a direct result of privatisation. The Government should allow time to debate such an important issue.

Turning to another subject, does the Leader of the House recall that, when he was Minister for the Disabled, he praised the Labour Opposition for devoting half a Supply day to debating the 15th anniversary of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970? Will the right hon. Gentleman, in his present capacity, find time for a debate on the 25th anniversary of that legislation at the end of May, which is of great concern to many people throughout the country?

Finally, as the Government's economic policy has reached a new low in credibility, will the right hon. Gentleman say when the Government expect to make their summer economic statement and when the House will have a chance to debate it?

**Mr. Newton:** I should have said that I expect the debate on Wednesday week to be of the kind that the hon. Lady has in mind, when I sit here for three hours and attempt to answer problems from all quarters.

I anticipate that the debate on Lord Nolan's report will be opened by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, who was responsible for much of the evidence that the Government submitted to the Nolan committee. That would seem appropriate. I was not absolutely clear whether the hon. Lady was referring to the proposals that are for the Government or those directed more at the House.

As to the recommendations concerning Ministers leaving office and appointments to what are known as quangos, the Government welcome and accept their broad thrust, but obviously they need careful and detailed examination. As to recommendations directed at the House, the report itself recognises that our rules and procedures are for the House to decide. However, the Government hope for wide agreement on a positive response to the report, which is in line with the hon. Lady's remarks.

On privatisation, my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade said in his statement earlier this week that there will be a debate, and obviously we will look at that again in the light of the Opposition debate scheduled for next Wednesday. There is not much that I can add to the remarks of my right hon. Friend in Prime Minister's questions today about the ABB closure at York. He made it clear that the problem is due to a number of factors including the completion of major contracts for Central line trains and some others and the firm's failure to win

*[Mr. Newton]*

contracts for the Jubilee line, Heathrow Express and Northern line. The hon. Lady might at least have acknowledged that.

The hon. Lady referred to something that I said about the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1972 when I was Minister for the Disabled. Substantial time has been provided this year for the Government Bill designed to build new rights for disabled people. That may be the most appropriate form in which the House will return to debate those matters in due course. At the specific request of the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris), I have agreed to open the exhibition starting on Monday to mark the 25th anniversary of the 1972 Act, which I shall do with pleasure.

As to the hon. Lady's over-aggressive final question, I will consider the timing of the summer economic debate, but I would do that with more enthusiasm had the hon. Lady not made absurd remarks about the credibility of Government economic policy against a background of the Labour party having no economic policy whatever.

**Dame Peggy Fenner** (Medway): Is my right hon. Friend aware of the way in which the Nolan report was made available to right hon. and hon. Members today? Will he direct this question to whoever is responsible for passing information to right hon. and hon. Members? Instead of the report being handed out as usual by the Vote Office in a perfectly competent and efficient way, the small Corridor next to the Members Board is full of individual envelopes. Am I supposed to look through them all to find F for Fenner? Busy Members of Parliament do not have time to do that. I ask my right hon. Friend to make sure that such communications are delivered in a more efficient manner.

**Mr. Newton:** I hope that those words have fallen on the ears of those who will immediately check that there are copies in the Vote Office. I understand that Lord Nolan thought that it was a proper courtesy on his behalf to arrange for copies to be sent to all hon. Members.

**Mr. Paul Tyler** (North Cornwall): Can the Leader of the House ensure that, when the Secretary of State for Transport takes part in the debate next Wednesday, whatever the precise terms of the motion, he takes the opportunity to range over all the damage that is being inflicted on the rail industry and the rail network by the continuing failure to invest when the threat of privatisation is hanging over the industry? I am not thinking only of ABB at York, to which my right hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) referred during Prime Minister's Question Time: I am also concerned—as I hope are the Leader of the House and the Secretary of State—about the continuing failure to bring forward the programme for maintenance and safety on the rail network.

As the Leader of the House may be aware, there are fears within British Rail and Railtrack that the hiatus caused by the problem is creating real difficulties in terms of speed restrictions, weight restrictions and threats to safety. Will he give an explicit assurance that the Secretary of State for Transport will address that question during the debate?

**Mr. Newton:** I can give the hon. Gentleman an explicit assurance that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport will cover all matters that he considers relevant to the debate and, no doubt, touch on points of interest to the hon. Gentleman. He may also make a number of points that the hon. Gentleman has not made, including reference to the fact that British Rail has invested £4,000 million in new rolling stock since 1979.

**Sir Peter Emery** (Honiton): Will my right hon. Friend remind the House that the Jopling reforms were introduced on a Sessional Order, and that, unless they are renewed or become Standing Orders, they fall at the end of the Parliament? At his request, the Procedure Committee is attempting to monitor their working and in order to obtain the opinion of all Members of Parliament, a short questionnaire will be circulated to all right hon. and hon. Members so that both sides completely understand whether Members of Parliament consider the reforms to be a success or a failure. It will be helpful if all right hon. and hon. Members respond to the questionnaire.

**Mr. Newton:** My right hon. Friend is certainly right to remind the House that they are Sessional Orders, although he marginally slipped in saying that they will fall at the end of the Parliament. They will fall at the end of the Session. I am happy to be used as a verbal notice board for the advertisement of the questionnaire of the Procedure Committee.

**Ms Angela Eagle** (Wallasey): With respect to the debate on the Nolan report, which I welcome, the Leader of the House told us that it will be on a motion for the Adjournment of the House. As a member of the Select Committee on Members' Interests, I carefully examined the recommendations that relate specifically to the House, rather than the Executive and other Government appointments. I notice that Lord Nolan has made three types of recommendation: those that he wants implemented immediately or as soon as possible; those that he wants implemented by the end of the year or the start of the new Session; and those on which he wants progress by the following year.

As the report would abolish the Committee on which I serve, and that Committee is in a difficult position at the moment, it would be extremely helpful if the Leader of the House could let us know when we can make progress on the changes that Lord Nolan recommends to how the Register of Members' Interests is formed and policed, as they have a direct impact on some of the complaints with which we are wrestling. It would be enormously helpful if the Leader of the House could give us an early indication of when progress will be made on those recommendations.

**Mr. Newton:** The hon. Lady has given quite a good illustration of why I feel that a wide-ranging debate on the Adjournment is the first step. They are complex and varied recommendations. Many of them require much detailed work to translate from the recommendations of the committee into resolutions that the House could pass. The right first step is not for me to prejudge what the House will wish to say next week or any other discussions that might be necessary to provide an opportunity, as I am doing, for the hon. Lady to make any points she might wish to raise.

**Mr. Richard Tracey** (Surbiton): Now that the House has had 24 hours to digest the excellent White Paper "Tackling Drugs Together", will my right hon. Friend

give urgent consideration to a debate on it in Government time? There seems to be a fairly short period before the deadline, especially for local arrangements to be made, and it would be useful for local authorities to have some guidance from the House and for hon. Members to be able to discuss it. That would also provide the Liberal party with an opportunity to explain how it will come to terms with the rather strange decisions taken by its last conference—to legalise cannabis, for instance.

**Mr. Newton:** As my hon. Friend will have heard yesterday, the Liberal Democrats who spoke then were also led into some rather curious contortions. As I said then, I do not particularly want to engage in their internecine warfare: I shall leave it to them to get on with it.

As for my hon. Friend's suggestion, nothing would please me more than to be able to arrange time for a debate on this well received and important report. I shall use my usual best endeavours to do that.

**Mr. Jim Marshall** (Leicester, South): May I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to early-day motion 1030?

[*That this House, concerned at the anger felt amongst the British Sikh community about the impact on the employment prospects of Sikhs of the Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations 1992, introduced as a consequence of a European Directive, notes that British Sikhs have for many years been exempt from wearing hard hats in many areas, including service in the British Army and on construction sites; and urges Her Majesty's Government to introduce amending legislation urgently so that British Sikhs may continue to work in all non-construction employment whilst wearing turbans.*]

That highlights the continuing concern among the Sikh community at legislation, introduced as a consequence of a European directive, which compels them to wear protective headgear in non-construction employment. Does the right hon. Gentleman recognise this continuing concern? The Sikhs believe that it will lead to a loss of jobs for them. Will he raise this matter urgently with the Secretary of State for Employment, and if possible arrange for a debate on the topic in Government time?

**Mr. Newton:** I shall certainly bring that question to my right hon. Friend's attention, but the United Kingdom was obliged to implement the directive, and granting a universal exemption could have run the risk of challenge.

**Mr. Henry Bellingham** (Norfolk, North-West): Further to today's statement on the Post Office, can the Leader of the House confirm that we shall have a debate on that paper in the near future, and that it never was the Government's intention to privatise Post Office Counters? Deliberately misleading propaganda on that front frightened many small postmasters in rural constituencies—they are the lifeblood of villages. Does my right hon. Friend agree that these same sub-post offices should be given the chance to have vehicle licensing facilities if they want them?

**Mr. Newton:** I will of course consider the question of a debate, as it would be right for me to do. As for my hon. Friend's second two questions, I do not think that I can give off-the-cuff undertakings about particular aspects of future Post Office business; but I can certainly confirm what he said—that there was a widespread and perhaps deliberately engineered misunderstanding about Post Office Counters. We should bear it in mind too that the overwhelming majority of their work has always been privatised because it is conducted in sub-post offices.

**Mr. David Winnick** (Walsall, North): Now that we have had Nolan, would it be possible shortly to arrange for a statement on setting up a committee to give guidance to Members of Parliament—particularly Tories—on voting? Has the right hon. Gentleman seen tonight's *Evening Standard*, which carries photographs of 44 Tory Members who betrayed their constituents last night by their disgraceful voting behaviour? As we do not yet have such a committee, is it not useful that the newspapers at least can highlight the way Tory Members are willing to give far greater loyalty to the Whips than to their constituents?

**Mr. Newton:** It is pretty silly to suggest that Members of Parliament whose judgment is at least as good as that of the hon. Gentleman, looking at the interests of their constituents in the round and at the need to reshape London health services, not least to improve primary care, should not have come to the conclusion that they should vote for the Government's proposals.

**Mr. Jacques Arnold** (Gravesham): I notice that the Opposition have called for debates next week, first against the privatisation of the rail services, and then against the privatisation of the nuclear industry. We have heard earlier today how they are against the privatisation of the Royal Mail. Does my right hon. Friend wonder why there has been such an enormous commotion over the abolition of clause IV when the Opposition continue to oppose privatisation serially, in case after case, as they always have done?

**Mr. Newton:** I shall indeed ponder that question, but without much expectation of either being able to provide an answer or getting one from anyone else. I am interested also in how the Labour party will explain what it would describe as the disadvantages of moving from a position in which nationalised industries used to cost £50 million a week to one in which privatised industries generate £50 million a week in tax revenue.

**Mr. Tam Dalyell** (Linlithgow): May I preface my question by saying that the Table Office, as always, has behaved impeccably and has simply been doing its job. However, as six questions to the Crown Office on Lockerbie and one to the Prime Minister have been refused because of the artful way in which Ministers block questions, and as the Lord Advocate is not answerable to the House, could we have some form of Government statement to follow the two hours of television this evening on Channel 4 about Lockerbie?

**Mr. Newton:** I was not aware of the position that the hon. Gentleman describes about questions being refused so I shall not attempt an immediate comment. I shall, of course, consider the point that he has made when I read it in *Hansard*.

**Mr. Nicholas Budgen** (Wolverhampton, South-West): May I remind my right hon. Friend that, in July 1994, our right hon. Friend the Prime Minister described Mr. Santer as being the right man in the right place at the right time? He no doubt then believed that that was the high point of Euro federalism. Will my right hon. Friend arrange an

*[Mr. Nicholas Budgen]*

early debate on the Commission's proposals for constitutional change in Europe so as to give the Government the opportunity of responding to the overwhelming will of the British people to reject all further moves towards federalism, and most of all to grasp the opportunity of using the issue to resuscitate the fortunes of the Tory party?

**Mr. Newton:** I have not had an opportunity to study the report in detail. There appear, however, to be some things in it with which we can agree—for example, that there should be no new powers granted to the Community, and the importance of subsidiarity. There are also quite a few things with which we, and no doubt my hon. Friend, disagree, such as the analyses of the scope of qualified majority voting, the powers of the European Parliament and the future of the intergovernmental pillars. Our views on those subjects, like my hon. Friend's, are well known.

**Mr. Stephen Timms** (Newham, North-East): The Leader of the House will be aware that we have just been through a period of exceptionally severe air pollution, the worst in Britain for 40 years. The committee that advises the Government on the medical aspects of pollution episodes has drawn attention to the serious health risks that arise from such episodes. Will the right hon. Gentleman offer us an early opportunity to debate the measures that need to be taken by government to deal with the problem of worsening air pollution?

**Mr. Newton:** I think that I was asked that question last week. I can only repeat—*[Interruption.]* That is an observation, not a complaint. The question leads me to repeat what I said last week: air quality is an environmental priority for the Government. That is precisely why we are bringing forward appropriate legislation in the Environment Bill, which will be enacted in the near future, to implement the widely welcomed proposals that we published in January.

**Mr. Bernard Jenkin** (Colchester, North): May I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to the fact that Mr. Santer's press conference yesterday was used to publish the Commission's submission to the reflections group? Would it not put flesh on the bones of the Government's determination to increase the role of national Parliaments in the European Union's affairs if we had a full debate on the Government's submission to the reflections group? Would not that give us the opportunity to expose the fact that the Labour party wants to give away more power to Europe, is irrevocably committed to a single currency and wants to increase qualified majority voting, which is deeply unpopular throughout the country and would be detrimental to our interests?

**Mr. Newton:** My hon. Friend, as ever, gives an absolutely accurate account of the Labour party's position. I shall do everything that I can to help him, or anyone else, gain it wider publicity.

**Mr. Max Madden** (Bradford, West): May I reinforce the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) about early-day motion 1030, which has been signed by 68 Members from all parties? May I ask the Leader of the House to press the Secretary of State for Employment not to hide behind the directive but to urge that there is an exemption—a derogation—throughout the European Union to allow Sikhs, wherever they live within the EU, to be able to continue wearing their turbans and not to face what they consider to be blatant job discrimination?

Would it be best for me to seek the support of the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor), who could add the matter to his list of demands for the forthcoming intergovernmental conference? Would that be the best way of resolving this objectionable issue, as a matter of urgency?

**Mr. Newton:** Leaving aside the hon. Gentleman's last comment, I note that he underlined what was said a while ago by his hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall). I cannot add to what I said on that occasion, but I shall draw the hon. Gentleman's remarks to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment.

**Mr. Patrick McLoughlin** (West Derbyshire): Before next week's debate on the subject, will my right hon. Friend draw to the attention of the Secretary of State for Transport early-day motion 71?

*[That this House welcomes the bid from GEC Alsthom for a 20-year service provision package, including new rolling stock, for London Underground's Northern Line and the job security which the award of this tender would bring to its factories in Birmingham and the North West; calls upon London Underground to make its tender decision strictly on the quality of the product and value for money; and commends the bid to London Underground on these criteria.]*

In the motion, a number of leading Labour politicians called for the latest contract that should have been given to ABB to go to GEC. Today, they are standing up in the Chamber and complaining about what has happened.

**Mr. Newton:** I will certainly do as my hon. Friend requests. No doubt Opposition Members who pressed in that direction will communicate with their hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Bayley).

**Mr. Tony Banks** (Newham, North-West): May we have a debate about sport as soon as possible? I am particularly concerned that the activities of a minority of football supporters have led to the majority of supporters travelling abroad being treated as though they had no civil rights, or had left them on these shores when they went to see their team play in Europe. The behaviour of the Spanish, Italian and Belgian police has been despicable. These are important issues, and people outside who support football are concerned about them.

**Mr. Newton:** I note the hon. Gentleman's concern. There is currently a wide interest in a number of issues concerned with sport, and I shall bear his request in mind.

**Mr. Harry Greenway** (Ealing, North): May I support the calls for a debate next week on pollution of the atmosphere—particularly in London, where, paradoxically, the better the weather the more polluted the atmosphere seems to be? Will my right hon. Friend assure me that provisions in the Environment Bill will allow measures to be taken to control vehicle exhaust emissions, which seem to be the main culprit in producing dangerous and obnoxious pollution in London?

**Mr. Newton:** I cannot make the precise promise that my hon. Friend requests, but I have already referred to

the importance that the Government attach to the matter, and have said that I expect a debate to be possible at an appropriate time.

**Mr. Paul Flynn** (Newport, West): When may we have a debate about the worrying trend for people to do jobs that are beyond their training or ability? In the past, we have heard of a hospital porter and a nurse acting as assistant surgeons; today, we hear of school dinner ladies acting as teachers during teaching time in a school in Bournemouth.

Did not the public express great concern about the matter last Thursday, when they sent the thunderous, deafening message that they consider one person to be doing a job way beyond his abilities or attributes? Should not the Prime Minister take on a job that is suitable to his character, becoming a bus conductor or perhaps a rose grower?

**Mr. Newton:** What can I say? I have never heard such a barmy question: that applies to all its ingredients.

**Mr. Nigel Evans** (Ribble Valley): Has my right hon. Friend seen early-day motion 1111?

[*That this House deplores the deceit of the Labour Party in failing to declare a figure for the national minimum wage; notes the report in the Guardian of 10th May that the husband of the honourable Member for Peckham, Mr. Jack Dromey, and challenger to Mr. Morris for the TGWU leadership, said that the TUC should campaign to persuade Labour to adopt a minimum wage figure of between £4 and £5 per hour before the election. He said he was confident that the TUC's policy will be £4 per hour-'indeed, if you look ahead two years, it may be closer to £5 per hour . . . we should seek support for that from the Labour Party'; further notes that studies by the OECD and IMF have stated that the policy of the minimum wage would cost jobs; recognises that a minimum wage in Britain of £4 per hour, with only a half restoration of differentials would cost 750,000 jobs; reminds the honourable Member for Peckham of the comment of the Deputy Leader of the Labour Party on LWT, 25th May 1992 that 'I knew the consequences (of the minimum wage) were that there'd be some shake out (in the jobs market), any silly fool knew that'; and calls on the Labour Party to come clean on the level of the minimum wage and end this gross deceit of the British people.*]

The motion contains Labour's plans for a national minimum wage. Can my right hon. Friend find time for a debate on the concept of the minimum wage? That might give us an opportunity to tease out of the Labour party the level of such a wage. If, as expected, it would be between £4 and £5, it has been estimated that three quarters of a million people would lose their jobs, at a time when more people are being employed: 632,000 have come off the unemployment register since the end of 1992. I believe that it would be catastrophic to introduce a minimum wage in this country.

**Mr. Newton:** I agree with my hon. Friend. That is one of the best suggestions for a debate that I have had this afternoon. The only thing that my hon. Friend got wrong was the use of the phrase "tease out". It is increasingly clear that we shall only get anything out of the Labour party with forceps.

**Mr. Mike O'Brien** (Warwickshire, North): May we have an early debate on the Government's policy on the proliferation of large-scale weekend car boot sales in rural areas, which are causing great concern to the villagers of Marston and Furnace End in my constituency, and in other parts of north Warwickshire, who are having to put up with the inconvenience of large numbers of cars travelling to those car boot sales? I am sure that that is a problem in many rural areas in Britain.

**Mr. Newton:** I can certainly confirm that I persistently find myself caught in considerable quantities of traffic, usually on Sunday mornings in my constituency, as a result of car boot sales. On the other hand, it also has to be acknowledged that that means that the boot sales are attractive to large numbers of people.

**Mr. Rupert Allason** (Torbay): My right hon. Friend will be aware that there was widespread concern following the collapse of the Matrix Churchill trial about the use of public interest immunity certificates, an issue which is being looked into by the Scott inquiry. Without prejudging Lord Justice Scott's recommendations, is my right hon. Friend aware that yesterday a public interest immunity certificate was issued in the Taylor case by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland? Without prejudging the issues there, would it not be better for evidence which affects national security at least to be given in private rather than to have the evidence suppressed altogether, which is bound to cause allegations and recriminations? Will my right hon. Friend ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to come to the House next week and make a statement on precisely why that evidence could not be given at least in private if it cannot be given in public?

**Mr. Newton:** My hon. Friend will understand that that is not a matter on which I would want to make any comment whatever from the Dispatch Box beyond undertaking to bring the question to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend.

**Mr. Dennis Skinner** (Bolsover): Why does not the Leader of the House reconsider the request that has just been made for a debate about the minimum wage? Such a debate would allow us to explain that Members of Parliament have a national minimum wage. Every single one is on £33,000 a year and no one can starve on that. Another 200 are picking up money on the side by moonlighting. That could be explained in the debate. All those issues could be brought to the attention of the people outside. If a national minimum wage is good enough for Members of Parliament, it is good enough for everyone else. Coincidentally, is it not true that in the 30 years since my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) became a Member of Parliament, we have not lost Members of Parliament, but we have increased the number. It was 625 when my hon. Friend came into the House. Now it is 651.

**Mr. Kevin McNamara** (Kingston upon Hull, North): It will be 659 after the next election.

**Mr. Skinner:** Far from jobs being lost in this place, their number is being increased. Let everyone have a bit of the action.

**Mr. Newton:** The hon. Gentleman might like to ask his constituents whether they think that the sum of money

*[Mr. Newton]*

that he is paid is worth it for having him come here and advocate policies which would undoubtedly cost a number of them their jobs.

**Mr. Alan Simpson** (Nottingham, South): Will the Leader of the House arrange for a statement on two items raised in today's *Financial Times*? The first relates to activities by National Power. I know that the Government are reluctant to intervene to tackle poverty pay, but may we have a statement on the public interest and public acceptability of National Power's decision to pay a golden hello to its new chief executive, Mr. Keith Henry, of £100,000, to supplement his meagre salary of £280,000? It would be helpful if the House could understand the Government's position on such payments.

The second, which it would be useful to clarify before next Wednesday's debate on nuclear power privatisation, is the suggestion that City investors would contemplate acquiring such shares only if the Government guaranteed a heavy discount on prices. It would be helpful, before we have a debate, for hon. Members to know whether the Government will give the City that discount.

**Mr. Newton:** I shall give the President of the Board of Trade advance notice of a point that the hon. Gentleman may seek to put to him next Wednesday. With regard to the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question, no doubt the point that he has raised, which is clearly one for National Power, also raises issues which might conceivably be felt appropriate for the Greenbury committee to consider.

## ABB Carriage Works

4.39 pm

**Mr. Hugh Bayley** (York): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 20, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the announcement earlier this afternoon that the ABB carriage works in York are to close with the loss of all 750 jobs."

This afternoon, the Prime Minister claimed that the Government are no more responsible for that closure than they are for somebody catching measles. The man is suffering from amnesia. Did not his Government claim, when rail privatisation legislation was going through the House, that there would be no hiatus in rail investment? Is the Prime Minister not aware that last year, for the first time in British Rail's history, it did not place a single new order for rolling stock for London commuters? Has the Prime Minister forgotten the statement made a year ago by his own Minister of State, Department of Transport that an order would be placed by September 1994?

This closure is an unforgivable act of industrial sabotage. In this week when the country is commemorating the 50th anniversary of the victory in Europe, the Government have achieved what Hitler did not achieve in the war—the destruction of a fine British manufacturing industry. Ministers should come to the House to say, in debate, what they intend to do to provide alternative work for the 750 men who are to be made redundant.

Already this afternoon, I have had commitments from York city council and North Yorkshire training and enterprise council to provide £50,000 each to look for alternative work. Will the Government match that pound for pound from their single regeneration budget? The Government have caused this crisis. They have a responsibility to find solutions and a duty to answer in debate for that catastrophe.

**Madam Speaker:** I have listened very carefully to the hon. Gentleman, and I have to give my decision without stating my reasons. I am afraid that I do not consider that the matter which he has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20 and I therefore cannot submit his application to the House.

## Points of Order

4.41 pm

**Mr. Tam Dalyell** (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Because you have been so indulgent to me this afternoon, I feel almost embarrassed about raising a point of order, but not quite, because it is a matter of some substance. May I ask you to call, from the expert Clerks of the Table Office, for an account of the circumstances of what actually took place during the rejection of six questions to the Crown Office and one question to the Prime Minister relating to why photographs of timers rather than the timers themselves were shown to the Scottish police in relation to Lockerbie?

There is the gravest doubt as to whether evidence held by the Crown Office is authentic. For two hours this evening, there will be a film and a long discussion—I hasten to say to my colleagues that I am not party to the discussion, and probably rightly so—among serious people about what is after all the biggest crime against western civilians since 1945.

Will you, Madam Speaker, ask the Table Office whether the artful way in which the Government are bypassing Parliament by cleverly wording answers to reject legitimate questions is bringing us all into disrepute? I hold that it is a matter for you, Madam Speaker.

**Madam Speaker:** I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's comments about my indulgence. I do not often receive such compliments.

On behalf of the Table Office, I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his earlier comments about the way that it handles his questions. The Table Office volunteered an explanation to me about why it was not able to accept the questions that the hon. Gentleman mentions. I know that he knows the answer. The Table Office is simply carrying out the rules and regulations of the House to see that our procedures and orders are upheld. The hon. Gentleman has raised such issues with me a number of times. I always look very carefully at the questions that he wishes to table and I know that he is helped enormously by the Table Office and, I hope, by my office as well.

**Mr. Max Madden** (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I am sorry to press your indulgence still further but you will remember that yesterday I raised with you the matter of the powers of Select Committees in relation to public interest immunity certificates. You were good enough to explain that the powers of Select Committees were not matters for you. Therefore, I have consulted the Clerks, and the guidance that I have been given is that, in their view, the powers of Select Committees to call for persons and papers includes the power to request Ministers who issue such certificates to attend a Committee to justify their action. From that, I assume that it is open to any Select Committee to exercise that power if it so wishes.

**Madam Speaker:** The hon. Gentleman has understood the procedure perfectly accurately.

## BILL PRESENTED

### Criminal Injuries Compensation

Mr. Secretary Howard, supported by the Prime Minister, Mr. Jonathan Aitken, Mr. Attorney-General, Mrs. Secretary Bottomley, Mr. Secretary Lilley, Mr. Secretary Lang, Mr. Secretary Redwood and Mr. David Maclean, presented a Bill to provide for the establishment of a scheme for compensation for criminal injuries: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon 15 May, and to be printed. [Bill 121.]

## Church of England Pensions

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—*[Dr. Liam Fox.]*

4.36 pm

**Mr. Frank Field** (Birkenhead): I shall begin by thanking the Leader of the House for expeditiously finding time for this debate. I confess that when he said during last week's business statement that the debate would be this week, I thought for a moment that perhaps the right hon. Gentleman, who is a clever political animal, had some difficult statement in store for us today and wished to clear the Opposition Benches to ensure that the Government had an easy ride. I say that only to dismiss that thought from my mind, because he clearly acted from far nobler motives.

Some people, sometimes following genuine inquiry and sometimes mischievously, ask why the Select Committee on Social Security carried out an inquiry into the activities of the Church Commissioners and specifically into the impact of recent events on the payment of clergy pensions. In answering that, I shall recall a statement by Aneurin Bevan. Unlike my Front-Bench colleague, I am old enough to know what Woolworth's was like in the old days. Its counters were neatly divided into little boxes and nothing was priced over sixpence. After listening to Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, Aneurin Bevan said that the speech was like a trip round Woolworth's: everything was in place and nothing was priced over sixpence.

Perhaps those who question the right of the Select Committee on Social Security to inquire into these matters have the Woolworth's mentality that life should be in neat little boxes and nothing should cost more than sixpence. I hope that, as the debate evolves, it will be clear why the Committee was involved and was concerned about this issue, and why it is the right of any Committee of the House to set its own agenda.

Although the debate may dwell on the darker side of what has happened in the Church Commissioners lately, this is also a tale of heroes and heroic events. I shall touch on the heroes at the beginning of my speech. The press nowadays comes in for a fair amount of stick because of the way in which it is said to lower public standards. If there is one recent hero in the media, it is clearly John Plender, and perhaps it says something about the close-knit community of the media that he does not seem to have gained any awards for his investigative journalism, from his base in *The Financial Times*, on the Church Commissioners.

One tends to think that, like organisations everywhere else, the media are a closed little body that award prizes to their friends. I have nothing against awarding prizes to one's mates. Indeed, one day I hope to find some mates who will have won some prizes, but it is of note that John Plender's work has not been publicly rewarded by his colleagues, as one might expect.

The *Financial Times* is somewhat remiss in the matter. The Archbishop of Canterbury told the Committee that he first found out the full extent of the nature of the crisis from reading the *Financial Times*, and I would have thought that it could have been a little faster off the blocks in placing advertisements so that business men could

realise that, if they wanted to know what was going on in their company, they should read the *Financial Times*, like the archbishop did. John Plender is certainly one hero.

**Mr. Bernard Jenkin** (Colchester, North): Surely the hon. Gentleman is not suggesting that, if the matter related to some Government quango, the media's attention would have been much more engaged, but that, because it had nothing to do with the Government, the rest of the media chose to ignore it.

**Mr. Field:** That was the last thing in my mind. As I have already had to confess today to one evil thought about the Leader of the House, I shall not follow the hon. Gentleman's comments.

The second hero of the story is the Archbishop of Canterbury. It is difficult to think of anyone in public life who readily takes the blame when events go wrong, but it is exceptional for someone to take the blame for events when he is clearly blameless. During the period under consideration, the archbishop was a diocesan for short time, and archbishop for an even shorter time, yet he immediately said that he, among others, was responsible for the events under discussion.

**Mr. Harry Greenway** (Ealing, North): I would certainly lead efforts to get awards to the hon. Gentleman for his good work on this and other matters. Does he agree that, as a result of the actions of the Church Commissioners, the archbishop will have a new and bigger responsibility than he has had so far? He will have to give real leadership to ensure that clergy pensions are paid and that clergy and other workers in the Church of England are not undermined in terms of their pay and how and where they live. He alone can do that. I hope that he will acknowledge that, because, so far as I can tell, his position has not changed. He has the same emoluments, the same pay and all the rest of it.

**Mr. Field:** In considering the matter, we should get away from debates about whether the whole financial problem can be solved by bishops living in two-up and two-downs. Such decisions are for them to make. The financial crisis is so serious that it will not be solved by such matters. I have no doubt that, given the type of leadership that the archbishop has shown, he will successfully see through the crisis into which the Church has been plunged because of events at the Church Commissioners.

Immediately after the archbishop read the *Financial Times* reports, he announced that an inquiry would take place. The commissioners like to conduct their affairs in secret. There is much less secrecy now, thanks to the advent of Sir Michael Colman, but clearly people there still wish to conduct their affairs with as much quietness as possible and would have pushed for the inquiry to be knocked into the long grass. The establishment of a Lambeth group and the publication of a report was the last thing that they would have wanted.

I do not want the debate to pass today without us paying a proper compliment to the archbishop for his leadership, for affirming his belief in openness, and for his resistance of the 150-year-old tradition in the Church Commissioners that such matters are best sorted out in private and that, at all cost, one should stop debate erupting into the public domain.

**Mr. Greenway:** I support what the hon. Gentleman has said. Does he agree that the Church of England will be in the position somewhat of, say, the Church in Australia? Its members will have to raise the stipends of priests and others. Leadership and inspiration to achieve that will have to come from the archbishop. People will be looking to him for that.

**Mr. Field:** I agree with that. I shall touch on that point later, if I may, but I do not think that we shall find the archbishop wanting in that respect.

Sir Michael Colman is the third hero. It would not be amiss if I told the House that, when Sir Michael first came before Committee members, we asked him to introduce his team. He introduced with ease those who were sitting with him at the table, but he somehow thought that we meant that he should introduce the whole of the party from the commissioners, and he found some difficulty in doing so. I caught the eye of two of the Conservative members of the Committee. They were looking at one another and the expression on their faces said, "Oh dear, we are clearly going to have some difficulties here."

By the end of that meeting, however, the honesty with which Sir Michael had answered our questions was such that the whole Committee was won over to him and had a certain admiration for the qualities that he was bringing to his task. I give just one example. When one of the Committee members asked him about activities in the Church Commissioners, he said if they had gone on in his company, that would have been unlawful. There was no pulling of punches, no wish to disguise, no intention of hiding the seriousness of the events under consideration. It is good news that Sir Michael was chosen; the way in which he has gone about his business since then is also good news.

The last events that I shall describe as heroic—because they are events and not people—relate to the commissioners' pay and pensions record. They have been slightly defensive about, and critical of, the report in that they believe that it should have emphasised their record more. I am sure that other hon. Members will rightly do so, and I have no wish to steal their thunder, but it is important to understand that the reason why the Church Commissioners are there, and the reason why they have stewardship over national resources, is to pay pensions and to help supplement stipends. I am anxious to compliment them on their record, but they are in business to do that.

Let me turn to the main substance of the debate, to its seriousness and how it will impact on the established Church and the parish system. It is important to put on record the fact that, because of gambling with borrowed money and speculation in the property market, at least £800 million of the capital base has been wiped out. It does no one any credit when some in the Church Commissioners continue to pretend that that had something to do with the movement of markets.

In our report, we cite funds that, although not identical—no fund is identical to the moneys held by the Church Commissioners—are similar to the portfolios held by the commissioners. We showed that, in the period during which the capital base fell by £800 million, other funds were successful in increasing the real value of their capital base. Therefore, I hope that, from this day, we shall have no more of such talk and complacency, with some commissioners still peddling, in public debates, the idea that the markets are really accountable and responsible for what has gone on.

*[Mr. Field]*

The charge against the commissioners is simple. By their actions, they have so undermined the capital base that the stream of income to the commissioners has been permanently curtailed. If there had been wiser stewardship, the capital base would not only have recovered to the extent that it has recovered in the past few years, but become much larger.

The second impact of the commissioners' actions—apart from up to £800 million being wiped off the value of the assets—is that, because the Church is now plunged into such a crisis over the payment of pensions, a sum will have to be transferred from the much-reduced capital base into a pension fund to meet past pension commitments. In a moment, I shall discuss the sums that the Select Committee recommended. At a minimum, one is talking about £700 million to £750 million. If we add together what will need to be transferred and what was needlessly lost from the capital base, we see that we are talking about a period of stewardship that has almost halved the size of the capital base that the Church Commissioners had not many years ago. That is a record of which most people would be ashamed.

A number of sores remain, to which the Select Committee drew attention in its report, and which will not go away. Some of my hon. Friends, if they manage to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will raise those issues, so I shall not dwell on them in detail, although I want to list them.

The first is the string of private companies that the Church Commissioners established so that they could undertake some of the property development work. The procedure was designed so that they could get round the legal limits on exempted charities. There are many private or joint property companies. Last night, the Church Commissioners kindly put on the board for me, and for other hon. Members, perhaps, a note that they had prepared on these bodies. The list was too large for me fully to digest before the debate today, so it is a matter to which we shall return.

I cite one paragraph of our report, which shows the activities in which the Church Commissioners were engaged. I refer to paragraph 3 of appendix 10, which is a letter from the National Audit Office to the commissioners. It says:

> "The Commissioners have paid out £3.2 million ostensibly for professional services provided by CC Projects but for which no services have been provided. Indeed the company has no staff".

Those sums, which were moved around to overcome the restrictions placed on the commissioners to prevent them from eroding their capital base and converting it into income, are of continuing concern to many people. The role of those companies will not go away.

The second issue that will not go away is what is euphemistically called the Ashford great park development. I use the word "euphemistically" because, according to the pictures I have seen, the area is still farm land. No development has taken place and no planning permission has been gained, but £80 million has been spent on the site. The Select Committee's recommendation was that the archbishop should seriously consider establishing a further committee of inquiry to examine how £80 million could disappear from the commissioners' assets into land that is not terribly good farming land and that remains without planning permission.

I am almost lost for words in trying to describe how £80 million could have been spent on that development. A careful investigation to try to trace those to whom that £80 million went from the commissioners might yield some interesting answers, and might even result in some people wishing to pay back some of the funds to the Church Commissioners.

**Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown** (Cirencester and Tewkesbury): Is not the whole investment in Ashford symptomatic of what happened in the crisis? The Ashford development was not mentioned in the Church Commissioners' reports until 1991, by which time £72 million had been spent on it. It was valued then at between £10 million and £20 million, and today it is valued at £3 million. The problem was the secretive way in which the commissioners went about their work. They did not tell anyone who was closely involved with the Church what was going on under their investment policy.

**Mr. Field:** It is worse than that. From looking at the annual reports, one could be fooled into thinking that the Church Commissioners were being open. Property portfolios were listed by value, up to certain sums. None of the figures was incorrect, but some of them were misleading. For example, a huge shopping development in the north-east which cost £360 million could be put under the heading of developments of more than £20 million. Although it would not be wrong to say that that development cost more than £20 million, some might think that the information was there to mislead people rather than to help them to have an informed debate. I very much endorse the point about secretiveness made by the hon. Gentleman.

The third issue that will not go away—the Select Committee has recommended that we follow it up—is the role of the National Audit Office in this tale. We asked the commissioners to provide us with their correspondence with the National Audit Office, which had been established as their auditor. We shall want to know why, for example, over the years, when the National Audit Office expressed its disquiet at some of the activities of the commissioners, and particularly at the way in which they presented their accounts in public, so little attention was paid by the commissioners to that, and why the National Audit Office did not take matters further. The Select Committee has already decided that it will look at that issue in greater detail at a later stage.

I now focus on some of the issues about which I and my hon. Friends are concerned and which help to point the debate to the future. I had intended to bill the first issue as the question of openness, but the hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown) put the other side of the tale and referred to the commissioners' excessive secrecy. There is a need for the archbishop and Sir Michael Colman to break the culture of secrecy within which the commissioners have worked for more than a century. It will be hard for the commissioners, who have served long in the commission, to throw away this wretched habit—one can get hooked on such things—but it is necessary for them to do so.

I quote from a letter from Dean Webster which I received this morning and which illustrates the strength of the secrecy. He says:

"I was a Church Commissioner for fourteen years and served on the Board of Governors, the Assets Committee and the General Purposes Committee. The borrowings for property investment and the CC Projects were never revealed to the Commissioners."

That letter is from somebody who was at the very heart of the elected structure of the Church Commissioners. He was excluded from the key decisions, not only in the preparatory stage and in their execution, but for some time after the decisions had been executed. The first thing that the archbishop and Sir Michael Colman must do is break the culture of secrecy to which so many of the long-established commission staff are so addicted.

Secondly, the Government need to look at exempted status for the commissioners and for other charities. Not so long ago—in 1985—the House passed, almost with acclamation, the Charities Act. In our debates then, we were assured that the exempt charities would continue their status and we were told how well run they were. The commissioners are an exempted charity, which raises questions about who advised Ministers on how exempted charities were run. Those questions obviously centre on the Church Commissioners today but also go beyond them to the other exempted charities.

There are two other important matters: the pension fund and the reform of the commissioners. There are clearly those who are pushing, from among the commissioners and, no doubt, from within the Synod, the view that a very large sum of money should be taken from the remaining assets of the Church Commissioners and transferred to a pension fund. The Committee is anxious that a pension fund should be properly established. It is anxious that that will, in a sense, act as the outward, visible sign to those who are retired or have earned pension commitments that past pension commitments will be met. It seems to us the proper way to advance.

We are not mindful to advocate that the sort of the sums suggested by the chairman of the pension board should be transferred into that new fund. We went for the lower figure, which Sir Michael Colman put forward to the Committee, about £730 million. That may need to be topped up in the future, but it ought not to be so topped up now that the commissioners are crippled in doing any of their other work or so that we would need another Bill before Parliament to transfer any surplus funds back to the commissioners. We need to establish a fund and it needs to be properly, but not excessively, funded.

The second major reform that follows from what I have said and from the inquiry that the Bishop of Durham is conducting involves the changing structure of the commissioners. That great reforming Prime Minister Robert Peel, when he first established the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, created a tightly drawn body of people who worked hard, made the decisions and ensured that they were carried out.

It was only when the bishops felt left out, and the other clergy felt unrepresented, that Lord John Russell extended the Church Commissioners to their present scope. We believe that the body needs to return to being the tightly organised, effective group that Peel originally established. However, in considering how to effect that and the pension fund, the question arises as to whether they should be dealt with by a Measure or by a Bill. Some people have all too readily ascribed to some of us who are pleading for a Bill motives that they would not wish to be ascribed to themselves. When I debate the issue, I try to put aside partial affections for the Church of England and view things as rationally as possible.

It seems to me, as I hope that it seems to other hon. Members, that if those two major reforms come to the House as Bills, the House will be able to debate them fully and amend and improve them if need be, before they become effective. I am told that there are some in the General Synod who will wish to move by a Measure. A Measure, put simply, will mean that we shall have an hour and a half of debate. We shall not be able to amend it in the way that we could amend a Bill. We shall be able only to approve or to reject it.

Before those siren voices in the Synod try to gather support for that campaign, let me again detail the difficulties that the House had when considering the Measures dealing with women's ordination and compensation. We were told that those Measures were linked, and that we could not debate them separately. Perhaps we should have probed whether that advice was correct. My view is that the House would have approved women's ordination by something like 500 votes to 10 votes and disallowed by not quite such a wide margin the Measure that dealt with compensation. Those of us who wanted women's ordination felt trapped because we had to support a compensation Measure that put us in the position of paying people to exercise their consciences.

Many of us pleaded that the Church should be as tolerant as possible of those who did not agree with the reform introducing women's ordination—after all, before the vote, they were in the majority. However, if those people decided that it was so abhorrent to them, they should have left as non-jurors, and gone without the money. Our views were not heeded. Not only is compensation costing about £3 million a year—it might eventually cost the Church £50 million—but it is clear that some unscrupulous clergy are using the Measure as an early retirement deal rather than in connection with their objections to women priests. Had we had the chance, the Church would have had its Measure on women's ordination, and that on compensation would have been rejected.

We need a Bill, because the necessary legislation will be immensely complicated. Any complicated piece of legislation can be improved by open debate. There is nothing to lose by having such a debate. The House does not want to overturn the 1919 enabling legislation. That is accepted. We argue that the issues of the pension fund and changes to the Church Commissioners' constitution go beyond what was envisaged in the 1919 legislation, which delegated to the Church the authority to act on legislative matters within its day-to-day running and to bring more significant changes in the canons over to the House to be approved. We now want to change a structure which had been approved before 1919 and, therefore, I hope that wiser counsels will prevail in the Synod when it debates whether Measures or Bills will come to the House.

We take an interest in this matter not only because of pensions and the need to safeguard the pensions of people who are already pretty poorly paid but because we know that parish priests everywhere carry out an important role in our constituencies. However, we are also interested and involved in the debate because the Church of England predates the state. It is impossible to think about English

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history without thinking about the Church of England. When the modern state was invented, the Church was coterminous with it. It is only much more recently, with growing secularisation, that there has been a clear division between the two.

It is as an English person that I speak today. I am grateful for the role that the English Church has played in our national life and much concerned about the future of that role, given what has happened to its historic resources, the gambling with borrowed funds in the property market and the need to create a pension fund with some of the remaining capital.

It is because I am concerned to try and get the right decisions for the Church of England that I have approached this debate, and the Committee's report, in this way. I hope that it will find favour on both sides of the House.

5.18 pm

**Mr. Michael Alison** (Selby): I congratulate the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), in his distinguished capacity as Chairman of the Select Committee on Social Security, on having taken the initiative in including the Church Commissioners in his Committee's comprehensive study of pension funds. I congratulate him and our other parliamentary colleagues who have served on the Committee on its examination and for the thorough-going and assiduous study that they have made of the Church Commissioners' fortunes in the widest, and also in the narrowest, sense. The resulting report, whatever else one may think of it, is a veritable encyclopaedia of useful and essential facts about the commissioners and their responsibilities.

As the Church Commissioners are directly and specifically accountable to Parliament, as well as to the Church of England, today's debate and the report that we are debating are both timely and relevant. Many of our constituents have a direct or indirect stake in the issues raised in the Committee's examination.

In his eloquent and intriguing speech, the hon. Member for Birkenhead produced his tripod of heroes—the journalist, the archbishop and the First Church Estates Commissioner. I endorse entirely his designation of those heroic figures. I only wish that I could label as heroes all the members of the Social Security Committee, including its Chairman. The trouble is, there are no heroes in Parliament. If one is a hero on one side of the House, one is an anti-hero on the other. Nevertheless, the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues have done a splendid job.

Paragraph 17 of the report, a seminal paragraph, refers to the significance of losses. It mentions the £800 million loss, putting the word "loss" in inverted commas, thereby slightly pulling the punch. In a verbal presentation, which the hon. Member for Birkenhead has just given, it is beyond the wit of man to include inverted commas.

Nevertheless, the famous paragraph 17 about the losses could be set as an examination piece for candidates aspiring to be journalists, archbishops or Church Commissioners. It could examine the way in which losses can be presented as grotesque and unbelievable or as not nearly as bad as they appear. There are many different ways of looking at the figures. The hon. Member for Birkenhead produced a slightly gloomier version in his speech than he did in his report. I make no complaint about that, because his report has laid bare many important and significant figures.

My inescapable role today is to speak on behalf of the Church Commissioners. I shall focus on the Select Committee's main recommendation which is that a separate, contributory pension fund should be established for future clergy pensions. The need for that was spelt out in the hon. Member for Birkenhead's speech and is mentioned fully in the report. It is vividly illustrated by the figures in table 1 of paragraph 15, again a seminal paragraph and set of figures.

The commissioners are 100 per cent. responsible for clergy pensions, and the larger the growth in the burden of pensions, the smaller is the contribution by way of subsidy that the commissioners can make in other directions such as the day-to-day costs of the clergy and the parishes. I am glad to be able to tell the House that, having worked intensively on a package of pension reforms since last autumn, the Church of England has been able to reach broad agreement on the establishment of a new contributory pension fund for future service.

At a national conference held a fortnight ago, the Church Commissioners, together with the Church of England pensions board, representatives from the 43 dioceses in England and the central board of finance—the General Synod's financial agency—agreed the principles and guidelines for setting up the new fund. It will probably be in place from the beginning of 1998. The little list that I have given of all those involved in the consultation and agreement is a vivid illustration of the complex intermeshing of interests and representative groups, organisations and administrative and executive bodies which make up the differential which drives the axle in the Church of England. It is difficult to escape from that clumsy and, in some ways, easily overheated piece of administrative machinery.

From the beginning of 1998, the Church Commissioners' pension liabilities will become limited and calculable because of the proposed cut-off point of liability, and the new contributory fund will start on its era of future liability. It will be the dioceses—ultimately, the parishes and their individual supporters—that will be the contributors, not the pensioner beneficiaries.

I shall list the recently agreed guidelines which will be presented to the Church of England General Synod for discussion and ratification in July this year. The first is a recognition that the present financial subsidy from the Church Commissioners to the ministry of the Church of England cannot keep up with the growth in its current and prospective costs and that the laity will have to contribute more. Sir Michael Colman—I am delighted that he made such a splendid impression on the Select Committee when it took evidence from him—in a heartfelt aside when being examined by one of the hon. Members present today, asked:

> "Do you realise that pensions in payment in the Church of England have increased from £18 million in 1981 to £70 million today?"

That was in December 1993. It is an illustration of the gigantic growth in pension liability and of the unavoidable necessity of getting extra lay support.

Secondly, extra contributions from the laity will have to be forthcoming, via parochial and diocesan contributions, to the new separate fund to provide support, particularly for the cost of future pensions. In effect

active parishioners will have to recognise for the first time that the cost of a future pension for a serving clergyman is part and parcel of the current cost of maintaining him in his daily work as an incumbent. They are already quite used to supporting and sustaining him in that daily work.

Thirdly, the commissioners have confirmed their continuing ability to meet their existing liability for past service, including pension increments. Fourthly, transitional measures will have to be put in place to help poorer dioceses and parishes to work up their pension contributions. Finally—the hon. Member for Birkenhead touched on this in an important passage in his speech—legislation will be needed to give the Church Commissioners the power that is at present denied them to use their capital for pension purposes. I shall talk more about legislation in a moment.

I hope that the House and the hon. Member for Birkenhead will feel that considerable progress has already been made in the essential dimension of pension security, which has, in many ways, been the Select Committee's overriding concern. The report's recommendations in that area are, in some ways, an endorsement of what is proposed as much as a trigger for change. They are none the less welcome for that.

The Select Committee in its report and the hon. Member for Birkenhead in his speech have been trenchant and unsparing in their criticism of the stewardship of the Church Commissioners in the recent past. I am glad that they have also been positive and constructive. It might help if I summarise briefly how the commissioners have sought to respond to constructive criticism. I do not believe that they can be accused of complacency. After all, in July 1992 the *Financial Times* article—the manifestation of the first new hero of the hon. Member for Birkenhead—picked up and blazoned in a headline story the serious implications of financial malaise that the 1992 Church Commissioners' annual report had somewhat over-technically and guardedly laid bare.

The Select Committee's report reasonably and fairly states in paragraph 3:

"The Archbishop of Canterbury responded immediately to this news by establishing an inquiry (known as the Lambeth Group), whose report was published in July 1993."

That is the first appearance of the second hero, and I am delighted that the hon. Gentleman gave the archbishop credit so early in his report for a response to that article. Much had already been studied, scrutinised, suggested and set in train by the time that we had reached today's debate. Incidentally, members of the Lambeth group represented a majority of non-commissioners over commissioners.

The group's 1993 recommendations have been acted on vigorously and promptly. On receiving the Lambeth group report, the Church Commissioners' board of governors immediately put in hand the pension fund reforms to which I have just referred. To assess long-term liabilities, an eminent actuarial firm, Watson, was appointed to give independent actuarial advice on our expenditure commitments, particularly clergy pensions. Its findings echoed those of Bacon and Woodrow, another leading actuarial fund which had provided similar advice to the Lambeth group two years ago. The Watson report provided the actuarial basis for the on-going work of the funding of clergy pensions.

The board tightened its regulation and oversight of the Church Commissioners' Assets Committee, which is effectively the investment engine room of the Church Commissioners. The board established an independently chaired audit committee in 1993 to scrutinise matters relating to, among other things, the appointment of an external auditor, the presentation of the commissioners' accounts and internal financial controls, and to consider any representations made to it by any person. On the matter of the appointment of an external auditor, we have consulted the Treasury, as we are required to do in the 1947 Measure governing the commissioners, and have been given the go-ahead to embark on a selection process.

An independent firm of surveyors were appointed in the spring to scrutinise the commissioners' property portfolio and to give strategic advice on it. The commissioners' new property group is working with the benefit of that advice. It is worth noting that the report by the surveyors found that, with few exceptions and taking into account certain admitted imbalances, the commissioners have a prime UK property portfolio.

The commissioners have long acknowledged, however, that we are too heavily weighted toward property in our investment portfolio and that re-balancing needs to take place. That is happening. For example, the House will probably know that the Metro centre in Gateshead is up for sale. That highly successful shopping centre, owned by the commissioners, is expected to fetch a sale price well above cost.

To strengthen internal management—

**Mr. Jenkin:** Will my right hon. Friend give way?

**Mr. Alison:** Certainly.

**Mr. Jenkin:** I hope that my right hon. Friend will forgive me, but I hear in his comments an echo of some of those made when the Select Committee was taking evidence. The Church Commissioners may well have a prime portfolio, but the Committee's assessment, from the evidence that it took, of the internal rates of return on the money invested simply does not match what the commissioners should have been able to generate. It is most important to emphasise that point. The Church Commissioners may well have some prime properties, but the prices that the commissioners paid for the development or purchase of them has never been justified by the returns.

**Mr. Alison:** My hon. Friend has to bear in mind the fact that the property portfolio taken in the round includes the agricultural estate. That estate is inherited and we have no control over the assets contained in it. The returns from each farm vary considerably and significantly and are themselves subject very often to rent controls, over which we have no real power or authority. Taking the property portfolio in the round and discounting the fact that we have very little control over the agricultural sector and very little ability to change the assets or get out of a particular farm, because of the tenancy restrictions, and isolating the property assessment purely to, let us say, commercial or retail shopping premises, the returns could be seen to be somewhat better, given manifestly failed enterprise investments such as Ashford great park, than my hon. Friend suggests. Certainly, for the most part, such investments were the result not of wild speculation but of considered advice from reputable agents such as Chesterton.

**Mr. Jenkin:** There may well be a residual agricultural property holding with the commissioners, but that does

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not explain why, for example, as table 3 in paragraph 35 shows, UK retail property rose from 7 per cent. of the portfolio to 32 per cent. of the portfolio by 1993. The Committee also demonstrated in the report where the quality of advice and analysis of those retail developments was substantially lacking.

I return to my main point. The money invested by the commissioners in retail property as a portfolio is not justified by the holdings of the Church Commissioners. It is incumbent on all the commissioners to be realistic—I am not questioning my right hon. Friend's motives in any way at all—about the fact that the performance of their property portfolio has been very disappointing indeed.

**Mr. Alison:** With the indulgence of the House, I shall repeat the point that I was making when I initially gave way to my hon. Friend. The commissioners have long acknowledged that they are too heavily weighted towards property in their investment portfolio and that re-balancing needs to take place. I make no bones about that. I do not dispute that, within that over-extended investment, there have been some disastrous investments.

I am reasonably arguing, however, that, within an over-extensive cornucopia, there are some good, solid assets which have been bought and in which we have invested on the advice of reputable, competent professionals in the field. I am trying to explain ways in which we are seeking to improve the advice and control that are to be put in place increasingly under Sir Michael Colman's leadership. That will mean that more and more highly competent professional advice will help us to isolate and pin down assets within a much smaller property portfolio, which will produce the kind of returns which my hon. Friend is correctly seeking and postulating.

**Mr. Clifton-Brown:** An examination of each section of a commercial pension fund against an index of performance of other pensions funds is undertaken every quarter at least. In his capacity as a Church Commissioner, would my right hon. Friend tell us whether that happens in the Church Commissioners' fund? In his opinion, is the re-balancing happening—quickly enough? The Lambeth report recommended that the property section of the fund should be reduced. I note from the Social Security Select Committee report that a normal commercial pension fund would have a property portfolio of no more than 16 per cent. whereas, even today, the Church Commissioners' property portfolio is 32 per cent.—double the amount.

**Mr. Alison:** My hon. Friend is slightly misconceiving the nature of the Church Commissioners' assets and investments portfolio, because it cannot properly be described as a pension fund or even be considered analogous to a pension fund. It is not a closed pension fund with regular income flowing into it. It is quite a different kind of investment portfolio for which no new money comes in.

In relation to its income, it is possibly over-capitalised. The problem is not too much capital but too little income flowing from it. To attempt to regulate and assess it, and measure it by reference to a proper pension fund is misleading and precisely one of the difficulties which has arisen in focusing the management of a fund which was not originally a pension fund. It had no new money coming into it, but it began to manifest vast new pension-oriented obligations, which, not being a pension fund, it was not properly equipped to dispose of or to handle.

In reply to my hon. Friend's intervention, may I say that I do not think that Sir Michael Colman, his advisers and, probably, the Church of England's pension boards look at the assets of the Church Commissioners, now and in the future, in precisely the same way as those responsible for a closed pension fund of, for example, a trade union, would assess and evaluate it. They are two different creatures.

**Mr. Clifton-Brown:** I fear that my right hon. Friend has slightly missed my point. Any investment fund can be measured on its performance against a basket of other funds. Therefore, it is quite possible to measure whether the Church Commissioners' fund in agriculture measures up to other pension funds in agriculture. It is quite possible to measure whether the Church Commissioners' equity fund matches the equity performance of other funds. Can my right hon. Friend tell me whether the Assets Committee or the commissioners regularly review their own performance against an index of other funds?

**Mr. Alison:** Indeed they do. They do not necessarily always compare the fund with other pension funds, but they compare it with other comparable investment holdings and investment trusts. The assets of the fund are regularly measured, and we in the Assets Committee get regular sight of comparable movements. The fund is not assessed and evaluated in terms of its performance precisely as though it is a pension fund. It is reasonable that it should not be so assessed.

I should like to elaborate on the attempted responses that the Church Commissioners have made to the criticisms of the hon. Member for Birkenhead and those of the Lambeth group. We have sought to strengthen internal management by creating two new professional posts on the Church Commissioners' staff. One is a deputy secretary responsible for finance, Mr. Christopher Daws, who wrote to the hon. Member for Birkenhead, who, in turn, mentioned that letter today. The other post, that of chief surveyor, is now held by Mr. Andrew Brown, who is in charge of the property portfolio.

They are both highly professional officers. Mr. Brown has been working in particular on long-range financial planning. It can therefore be said that we have acknowledged past mistakes, heeded criticism relating to them and acted on them in every area. I hope that the House will agree that such swift and comprehensive action for reform is not evidence of complacency.

**Mr. Simon Hughes** (Southwark and Bermondsey): In advance of the Turnbull report, have the processes followed by the commissioners been relaxed, so that meetings are open rather than closed, to enable members of the General Synod and others to attend? Has any attempt been made to make the organisation far less hierarchical? The only representatives of the ordinary members of the Church appear to be deans, who are hardly at the bottom of the hierarchical pile when it comes to representing the person in the pew. It does not look as

though the organisation has been subject to much democratic scrutiny so far. Has that failing been noted and has it been, or is it about to be, corrected?

**Mr. Alison:** I am bound to tell the hon. Gentleman that, in advance of the Turnbull report and the recommendations of the Select Committee on Social Security, apart from a fresh breath of stimulating air and ozone that has come through the arrival of Sir Michael Colman and the appointment of the two important new officers, whose names I have just given—after all, "the spirit giveth life", not the body necessarily—no fundamental structural changes have yet been made. The proceedings of the committees are governed as heretofore by the same regularity, membership and attendance.

There is no point in tinkering with that aspect of the machinery, which is under the intense scrutiny of the Select Committee and Turnbull, in advance of what those experts will deliver to us. Nothing fundamental has changed in the mechanics and nuts and bolts, but a new spirit is abroad in the commission as a result of the appointment of the new First Estates Commissioner and the new leadership.

**Mr. Frank Field:** I talked in general terms about complacency, which was unfair on the commissioners' staff. The right hon. Gentleman has been clear about how matters have changed, but, on 24 April, the first, leading letter published in *The Times* came from Mr. E. G. Nugee QC. Much of that letter revealed such complacency. In the House we are expected, even pre-Nolan, to declare interests. That gentleman could have well declared his interest because, if I am right, he was the commissioner to whom other commissioners went for a legal opinion on whether the commissioners could borrow. They did so to pursue the wretched policy that has led to the events that we are debating today.

Mr. Nugee gave a legal opinion on what the commissioners' position would be on borrowing. That was a highly contentious opinion. The Select Committee asked for that opinion, but we were given only part of it. We did not press our powers to ask for all of it. Mr. Nugee then had the nerve to write to *The Times* and referred to "loss", suggesting that, somehow, the market brought about the paper losses. I had in mind people like Mr. Nugee when I spoke about complacency. I did not have in mind the good members of staff who serve the commission well, the new breed of staff who are coming in or the first three Church Estates Commissioners currently in post. A group of commissioners, however, are still unbelievably complacent about their stewardship.

**Mr. Alison:** The hon. Gentleman has introduced a non-hero to offset the three heroes whom he presented to us earlier. I am not responsible for that non-hero—alas, I wish that I could be responsible for the three heroes who were presented to us earlier. I am responsible for neither.

Mr. Nugee's letter was not stimulated by me and I doubt that it was stimulated by Sir Michael Colman or his staff. Mr. Nugee expressed his own views, but, to do him justice, he mentioned the £800 million "loss", as does the Select Committee in the famous paragraph 17 of its report. Mr. Nugee has done nothing more significant than to quote a relevant passage from the report of the hon. Member for Birkenhead.

As I have said, there are various ways of presenting a fascinating assemblage of figures—paragraph 17 of the hon. Gentleman's report has produced such a fascinating assemblage of figures. Mr. Nugee, our new anti-hero, has produced an interpretation of those figures with which I know the hon. Gentleman disagrees. I am not responsible for Mr. Nugee, but I take note of what he has said. It is reasonable for someone like Mr. Nugee to demonstrate that there are different ways at looking at sets of figures. Statistics are notoriously malleable and elusive when one tries to pin them down to reveal the reality and their ultimate truth.

The hon. Member for Birkenhead referred to legislation. Let me focus at once on the Select Committee's recommendation that legislation to set up a separate pensions fund and to reform the Church Commissioners should be enacted by a parliamentary Bill rather than a Measure passed by the General Synod and subsequently considered by Parliament. Although there is likely to be much common ground between the Church of England and the Select Committee on other recommendations contained in its report, I fear that there will not be quite such ready agreement on that recommendation.

There is likely to be a strong objection to the proposal for several compelling reasons, as the Church of England sees it. The Select Committee bases its argument for a Bill on three grounds. First, it argues that the historic resources of the Church of England were contributed to directly by the monarch and that they belong not to the Church but to the nation as a whole. Of course the resources of the Church of England are at the service of the nation as a whole, and it intends that they should remain so, but, as the Church would argue, they derive mainly from Church, not state, sources.

When the assets of Queen Anne's bounty and the Ecclesiastical Commissioners were combined in 1948, 32 per cent. came from Queen Anne's bounty, but 68 per cent. from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, whose assets derive from Church sources. Those are resources, in short, in which the state and the nation both have a proper interest, but the Church of England has a proportionately greater one, according to those figures.

Secondly, the Social Security Select Committee argues that a Bill would maximise the opportunities for debate on the future of the Church Commissioners. However, although a Bill would undoubtedly maximise the opportunities for the opinions of the House and of another place to be taken into account, there remains as a result an acute dilemma. It would necessarily deprive, to that extent, the Church of England of an opportunity to have, through the elected members of its General Synod, a parallel and proper voice—at least in terms of the constitutional understanding dating from 1919.

The matters that we would debate in a Bill in the House are crucial to the future of the Church of England. A Measure, it can be argued, first debated in Synod and then in this and another place, would give an opportunity for all the interested voices to be heard.

**Mr. Frank Field:** No one disputes that we could hold a debate on it, but we could not amend it. Surely there is nothing to prevent Synod from debating the Bill before it came to this place and another place, so that it goes through all the stages that we would go through.

**Mr. Alison:** Later I shall suggest a way in which one might proceed roughly along those lines.

*[Mr. Alison]*

Thirdly, the Social Security Select Committee argues that there is an urgent task in deciding to whom the commissioners should be responsible and that an Act of Parliament would appear the least contentious way of resolving that. Alas, I am advised that a Bill would be very contentious—at least, in Church of England eyes.

In 1919, Parliament decided to delegate a significant, although not a final, say in ecclesiastical legislation to the Church of England through the Church Assembly and its successor, the General Synod. In the past 75 years, Church and state have held to that understanding, including at the time the Church Commissioners, who were brought into existence, by Measure, in 1947. If a Measure were the right course then, it is arguably the right course now.

The arrangements for legislation on Church of England matters in the Church of England Assembly (Powers) Act 1919 embody a partnership between Church and Parliament. It is a balanced partnership, in which both parties have a voice. As a member, like the hon. Member for Birkenhead and others, of the Ecclesiastical Committee, I am, however, well aware of the frustration that several of my colleagues and I feel at their inability to influence the details of legislation on Church matters. It is a take-it-or-leave-it position.

I can tell the House that the Church of England authorities are ready to consider ways in which Members of the House and of another place might be enabled to express their opinions in connection with the details of legislation on the important matters covered by the report, and likely to be contained in any prospective legislation. In other words, my heart is with what the hon. Member for Birkenhead seeks to secure. I believe, from comments made by Sir Michael Colman in the evidence that he gave to the Social Security Committee, that he would be only too happy for Parliament to have an important say in all that.

**Mr. Alun Michael** (Cardiff, South and Penarth): I should be grateful if the right hon. Gentleman would explain what he proposes. I intend to mention that issue in my remarks. I felt that there was a certain circumlocution in what the right hon. Gentleman said. What precisely is he suggesting?

**Mr. Alison:** To be honest, we have not worked through the ways in which there might be variations on the existing machinery of the General Synod, through its Legislative Committee, sending across a Measure to our Ecclesiastical Committee, but it might be possible to turn the Ecclesiastical Committee into a type of Standing Committee to consider a Measure before it is crystallised in final Measure form, so to speak.

I shall attempt to elaborate what might happen. A tentative Measure might be informally passed to the Ecclesiastical Committee, so that we had the chance to consider it, make suggested amendments, take evidence about it and send it back, before the whole thing was crystallised and came across as an unamendable Measure.

It is not beyond the wit of man to think of a way in which that might be considered. However, we are seeking to discover whether an experimental innovation would be feasible, to satisfy the aspiration that we have in the House to get into the text and detail of a legislative proposal on a subject that is very important to Parliament.

**Mr. Michael:** If I understand him correctly, the right hon. Gentleman continues to suggest that the Measure would come before the House in a means that was not open to full debate, amendment and the type of consideration that the members of the Select Committee considered appropriate.

**Mr. Alison:** It would not come before the House to the Chamber of the House, sitting as a Committee of the whole House. However, it might come to the Ecclesiastical Committee in a form in which that committee was asked what amendments it might want to make if the Measure were to come before it in a full-bodied Bill form and, in that tentative way, return to the Legislative Committee of the General Synod with our suggested amendments before the full original panoply of unamendable Measures came before the Ecclesiastical Committee and the House.

I think that the hon. Gentleman has agreed that in that respect there might be some scope for innovation, but that is a tentative, uncharted area, so I do not pretend that it is definitive.

**Mr. William Powell** (Corby): I wonder whether that can be right, because the Ecclesiastical Committee is not a Committee of Parliament. It is a statutory committee, set up by Act of Parliament in 1919, and the only things that it can do are those matters that are laid down in the statute itself. Therefore, if my right hon. Friend suggests that the Ecclesiastical Committee should proceed in a way that is not laid down in the statute of 1919, there will need to be a prior Act of Parliament to enable it to do that.

As it would be absurd to pass a prior Act of Parliament to enable the Ecclesiastical Committee to proceed in the manner that my right hon. Friend suggests, I am afraid that the solution that he now proposes is inappropriate and impossible to achieve. Will my right hon. Friend and his advisers seriously consider the impossible roadblock that that will create?

**Mr. Alison:** I take note what my hon. Friend has said. He has sat on the Ecclesiastical Committee for as long as I have and as frequently as I have, and he knows the extraordinary flexibility that it can deploy when it wants to discuss an issue. We witnessed some of those unusual, original and surprising forms of consideration when we considered the Measure regarding the ordination of women.

I am not attempting to lay down or to expose or propose anything final and definitive. The hon. Member for Birkenhead—he strikes a sympathetic note with me in this—wants Parliament to have the powers that it has in considering a Bill, to be able to make amendments and consider the matter in its full analytical role, as is usual for us here. That would be extremely difficult for the Church of England to think of—an irresistible force and an immovable object.

If it is possible to find a compromise that will enable the House of Commons to have some say in the details of a legislative proposal before it is finally crystallised, it might be, in some informal way, along the lines that I have suggested. If that proves to be impossible, I suspect that we shall not be able to have a Bill and that it will

have to be a Measure. However, I would like to discover whether it is possible to find some way in which the circle might be squared, or vice versa.

**Mr. Simon Hughes** *rose—*

**Mr. Jenkin** *rose—*

**Mr. Alison:** I must proceed; my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) may be able to make his argument in a speech.

The hon. Member for Birkenhead referred to subsidiary companies. For the sake of brevity, I shall, with the hon. Gentleman's permission, skip the passage that I was going to offer the House about subsidiary companies, because he has received a rather more definitive answer in a letter than I can offer in a short paragraph this afternoon. He is at liberty to pursue the matter further if he wishes.

The hon. Gentleman was quite emphatic about the Ashford great park project. There is no evidence to suggest that we need a new, full-blown and inevitably expensive inquiry into the project along the lines that the Select Committee report recommends. However, we are anxious to be responsive and helpful to the Committee in that respect. Therefore, the Archbishop of Canterbury has agreed that the new Audit Committee, with additional independent and external expert assistance, is an appropriate body to carry out an independent investigation that will be set in train forthwith. The Archbishop of Canterbury will take a strong personal interest in the matter. I hope that the hon. Gentleman feels that that is a positive and constructive response to the anxieties that he and his colleagues have expressed in the report.

Many of the issues raised by the Committee are very much at the heart of the work of the so-called Turnbull commission which is reviewing the Church's central structures under the chairmanship of Michael Turnbull, the Bishop of Durham. The Select Committee report contains a particularly felicitous and intriguing historical passage. There are some real nuggets in paragraphs 9 and 10—I suspect the direct imprimatur of the hon. Member for Birkenhead.

Thomas Arnold said that no human hand could save the Church of England, and that phrase rings out quite early in the report. Echoing Thomas Arnold's gloomy prophecy, the hon. Gentleman may also have been tempted to think that no human hand, not even the Turnbull commission, could save the Church of England. As part of its functions, the commission will consider the Select Committee's various recommendations in the next few months. If no known human hands can save the Church, I think that we may find that we are getting close to salvation in the shape of the hero of the day, the hon. Member for Birkenhead, and his team from the Social Security Select Committee. Those human hands have done a lot of valuable work in this area; the Committee has made some constructive suggestions, which the Turnbull commission is taking into account.

We hope that Thomas Arnold's gloomy prophecy will be laid to rest by the new body that will emerge in the spring. We hope that new growth and new prospects will arise from the hon. Gentleman's studies and criticisms and from the Turnbull commission—our new deployment of heroes. The prospects are very good. I reiterate the commissioners' thanks to the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues in the Select Committee for their work in producing the report.

6.2 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Nicholas Baker):** I would like to pay my tribute to the work of the Social Security Select Committee, whose report we are debating today. I have listened with interest to the arguments put forward by the Committee Chairman, the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), and the comments of my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison).

It may be helpful if I intervene at this stage to explain the Government's position. I shall comment briefly on some of the points in the report rather than try to provide an answer to the matters raised in the report or in the debate—that is not my function today.

The Coopers and Lybrand report and the report of the Lambeth group, together known as the Lambeth report, have allowed the Church of England to examine in depth the performance of the Church Commissioners and to consider the way forward. The Lambeth report made several specific criticisms of the management of the Church Commissioners' assets, and went on to address a number of long-term financial questions, including the mounting cost of clergy pensions. The report contained recommendations designed to prevent any recurrence of the events and my right hon. Friend has told us how the Church of England is now acting on those recommendations and I believe that the House will be impressed by its spirited and speedy action.

The review conducted by the Turnbull commission included an examination of the relationships between the executive functions of the General Synod, the Church Commissioners, the Church of England pensions board and the staff of the Archbishops of Canterbury and of York. The commission is due to report later this year.

The Social Security Committee report looks ahead to what may emerge from the Turnbull commission. It argues strongly for greater parliamentary intervention in the process by which the Church of England chooses to organise itself to face the future and urges that the legislative mechanism used to give effect to any proposed changes should take the form of a public Bill. I shall briefly address that issue.

Since 1919, when the Church of England Assembly (Powers) Act was passed, Parliament has delegated to the Church of England—first to the Church Assembly and now to the General Synod—considerable powers of initiative over its own affairs. Ultimate control, however, has always remained with Parliament which can debate Synod Measures and accept or reject them.

All Synod Measures are scrutinised in detail at several stages within the Synod and there is opportunity for debate and revision, just as there is in this House and in another place. It seems entirely right that the way forward for the Church of England should be led by the community of that Church. Of course, Parliament continues to play an important role in scrutinising each Measure—for example, ensuring that there is nothing in it that adversely affects the interests of the nation in any wider sense—and, in exercising its final dispensing power, may accept the measure or reject it.

One of the reasons why the 1919 Act was passed was that the vast increase in parliamentary business in the 19th century meant that very little time was available for ecclesiastical legislation. Time and again, ecclesiastical

*[Mr. Nicholas Baker]*

business failed to proceed. It is evident that the position is, in principle, no different today. Indeed, we all know that the pressure on parliamentary time is even greater.

I am afraid that I cannot accept the arguments advanced by the hon. Member for Birkenhead because of the House's limited time and capacity to deal with the details of Church Measures. I draw comfort—as I hope the hon. Gentleman will—from the clear endeavours to which my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby referred to find ways in which there may be greater input, even if there may be difficulties with his suggestion.

It is also an established convention nowadays that the Government should remain neutral on all Church matters. We do not yet know what the findings of the Turnbull commission will be. If, when the commission has reported and its findings have been considered, the Church of England decides that it wishes to proceed by means of a Measure, I cannot foresee any grounds that would be likely to impel the Government to object.

Another point raised by the Select Committee Chairman was that the Government should satisfy themselves on the exempt status of each of the other charities that maintain their status in the legislation that follows the Government's White Paper "Charities—A Framework for the Future".

**Mr. Jenkin:** There is some difficulty with my hon. Friend's earlier point that there is an established convention that the Government should remain impartial in these matters, as several Ministers are also Church Commissioners. The system of accountability among Church Commissioners has broken down, and to that extent they have, as a body, rather forfeited Parliament's trust. That was not just the argument of the hon. Member for Birkenhead; the proposal was also adopted unanimously by members of the Social Security Select Committee. I urge my hon. Friend to consider the matter more carefully.

**Mr. Baker:** I take my hon. Friend's point seriously. The constitution of the commission not only was considered by the Select Committee but is an aspect on which we may hear more from the Turnbull commission. I imagine that the commission will want to address my hon. Friend's point, and we will have to examine it as well—for the reasons that he gave.

The Government do not accept that what has happened to the Church Commissioners gives grounds for instigating a review of the status of all exempted charities—those listed in schedule 2 to the Charities Act 1993. They include many universities, grant-maintained schools and certain museums and galleries. It is evident that the Church of England has recognised that mistakes were made in the past and that it is working to develop systems and structures that will prevent them from being repeated.

The Church Commissioners may give advice to exempt charities if it is sought. I understand that they are most willing to discuss with any exempt charities ways in which links providing access to that advice can be strengthened to the benefit of exempt charities. That is certainly a welcome offer.

The issue of pensions is certainly important and one on which the Lambeth report and the Select Committee made recommendations. My right hon. Friend the Member for Selby described action by the commissioners, with which I am sure we are all impressed. Any new scheme for Church of England and clergy pensions will have to comply with pensions legislation, including the requirements of the Pensions Bill now before Parliament. One aim of that Bill is to establish a clear framework of statutory obligations for employers, trustees, scheme professionals and others associated with pensions schemes.

It is clear that the Church of England is facing a formidable challenge as it seeks to address complex financial and organisational issues. The Government wish the Archbishop of Canterbury and his colleagues well as they begin to identify solutions that will permit the Church of England to learn from the mistakes of the past and to tackle the issues that it faces. The Select Committee report makes an important contribution to that process.

6.11 pm

**Mr. Alun Michael** (Cardiff, South and Penarth): I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) and to the members of his Committee, who have done a great service to the long-term interests of the Church of England and the House. The report was undertaken with two clear objectives. One was to find out what went wrong and what lessons could be drawn for the future operation of pension funds. The other was to establish how Parliament could ensure that structures imposed by law on the Church of England are efficient and appropriate to contemporary conditions. In exploring the second area, the Committee has given us much food for thought in respect of the operation and accountability of exempt charities—an aspect that the Minister rather dismissed.

My hon. Friend looked for heroes in describing what is in many ways a sad and sorry tale. I join his tribute to the Archbishop of Canterbury and welcome the many positive responses made to some events. The Committee concentrated on ensuring that the events in question will never be repeated and on protecting the interests of the clergy and the public, which must be right.

The right hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Alison), responding on behalf of the Church Commission, rightly acknowledged the report's importance as a source document. He referred to it as an encyclopaedia. He acknowledged also the accountability of the Church Commissioners to Parliament as well as to the Church. The right hon. Gentleman put on record the Church Commission's current position and the responses made to a variety of events. That was welcome, as were the right hon. Gentleman's assurances on a number of points.

The right hon. Member for Selby suggested that figures and statistics are elusive and difficult to pin down, but that is no excuse for not trying, and why it is important to deal with figures professionally and with integrity. The right hon. Gentleman's description of the historic sources of the Church's finance is not a ground for seeking to diminish public interest in the events that occurred.

The right hon. Member for Selby was right to stress the importance of having the right people in place who will operate with integrity. On a recent visit to the Clerks

office I saw on the notice board a quotation from Gibbon's "The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire":

"The operation of the wisest laws is imperfect and precarious. They seldom inspire virtue, they cannot always restrain vice, their power is insufficient to prohibit all that they condemn, nor can they always punish the actions that they prohibit."

Nevertheless, the House has a responsibility to try to form laws which prevent the triumph of evil and encourage virtue. That is what structures for accountability are all about.

My hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead outlined points of detail from the report which must be dealt with, but I will concentrate on issues of wider public interest and the Government's duties in responding to them. I was disappointed by the Minister's response, which was lightweight and dismissive of Government responsibility. Is that really the Government's considered response to a catastrophe—as it has been described—threatening not only the Church of England's parish work but the health of communities in which the Church works throughout the country? The Minister missed the public interest issue which led the Home Office to despatch a Minister to the Chamber to answer the report.

The Minister responded as though this were just ecclesiastical business, but public interest goes beyond merely ecclesiastical issues. This is not a party political issue in any sense, but the Opposition have a right to demand evidence that Ministers have understood their responsibilities, considered the evidence and findings of the Select Committee, and identified actions which the Government must take to resolve the matter. The Minister's response was lacking in each of those areas.

The House may consider that I approach the subject with the right balance of concern and objectivity, having been born and nurtured in the Welsh Presbyterian Church and being a regular communicant of the Church in Wales. I therefore observe the situation in England as an Anglican, but from the healthy perspective of disestablishment.

As a youth and community worker in my own city of Cardiff and in my constituency, I have seen at first hand—as in other parts of the country—the work of the Church and the leadership offered by fine priests in deprived areas, in which the priest and the minister are sometimes the last professionals to live in the communities they serve. At its best, and with the best leadership, the Church is often a beacon of hope in communities worst hit by economic and social decay.

I do not say that the Church and its leaders have been perfect. Neither do I limit my remarks to the Anglican Church. Members of the clergy in the United Reformed Church, Methodist Church and Roman Catholic Church also stand out in my experience—not least when they work together ecumenically, yn cytyn, across boundaries of Church organisation. My experience confirms the Select Committee's point that the loss of clergy from inner cities and housing estates would be a tragic impoverishment of communities already buffeted by poverty and despair. That is not to discount the spiritual gifts that the Churches bring to their work, but public interest issues should be of great concern to the House.

Today's debate is an occasion not just for looking inward at the interests of the churchgoing community but for considering the wider public interest. The Government have a clear responsibility to ensure proper regulation of those responsible for charitable funds. As the Minister acknowledged, the Church Commission is an exempt charity. That concept is often confused in the public mind, and it may have become confused in the minds of some commissioners during the events which led to the tragedy.

The Church Commission is therefore exempt from the requirements to register as a charity and the Church Commissioners are not subject to regulation by the Charity Commission. Let us be absolutely clear that they are not exempt from all responsibilities under charity law, nor should their moral and legal responsibilities of duty and care be taken any more lightly than those which apply to the trustees of charities that are registered and regulated.

It is clear that the culture of our times has led to a lowering of standards and the suspicion that the Church Commission is not the only exempt charity to have fallen below the highest standards. I do not accept the Minister's view that there is no need to look again at the way in which the law operates in respect of other exempt charities as issues arising from the events involving the Church Commission read across into concern about how charity law applies to exempt charities in general.

We may debate on another occasion whether the system of registration and regulation is satisfactory. I feel that in some cases the Government interfere when they should keep their nose out, while in others they fail to ensure a proper degree of public accountability. That was well illustrated in the debate in Committee on 29 March on the Charities (Trustee Investments Act 1961) Order, but it is not the point today.

The Church Commissioners are subject to charity law and all the legal and moral responsibilities which apply to trustees. The Minister said that there is nothing to stop them making use of the expertise of the Charity Commission, particularly in respect of trusteeship and investment policy. To be sure of my ground, I spoke to the Chief Charity Commissioner yesterday. He felt that it would be not be right for him to discuss any specific charitable bodies, but he confirmed that many exempt charities make use of the services of the Charity Commission and maintain a close working relationship with his office. The Charity Commission's guidance and advice and publications are also readily available.

It is right that the Chief Charity Commissioner, Mr. Richard Fries, should observe the courtesies of confidentiality while confirming the general picture, but the Minister has a more specific role. In preparing for today's debate I expected him to have investigated with the Church Commissioners how they carried out their functions and the relationship that they enjoy with the Charity Commission, as the body established by Parliament and the instrument of Government in regulating charities.

*[Mr. Alun Michael]*

I am more than willing to give way to the Minister if he wishes to respond to that or other issues that I have raised. I expected him to cover such issues in his own speech, but I am happy to let him remedy that fault in an intervention.

**Mr. Nicholas Baker:** Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that the category of exempt charities should be withdrawn or abolished?

**Mr. Michael:** No. I am suggesting that the category of exempt charity needs to be considered in the light of what happened in respect of that particular exempt charity and the findings of the Select Committee report.

The Minister has not responded to the Select Committee report, which raises important issues. Nor does he appear to have discovered the relationship between the Church Commissioners and the Charity Commission. He made no comment about that, except to refer to the potential for a relationship between an exempt charity and the Charity Commission.

Is it the business of Parliament? Yes, it certainly is. As Parliament grants the Church Commissioners freedom of operation and the protection of their charitable status, they are accountable to Parliament, which has an important role in scrutinising the way in which they discharge their duties. The Select Committee report needs the most careful study and a detailed response because it is the instrument by which the House is enabled to carry out its obligations. If the Select Committee had not undertaken an investigation, we would not be debating the issues and there would have been no accountability in matters of great public interest. The Government also owe us a specific explanation, as it is an issue on which Home Office Ministers have pontificated in the past. Proper regulation of the Church Commissioners was a subject for concern before the Government's last major foray into legislation on charitable law.

I shall not repeat the comments of the hon. Member for Birkenhead, the Chairman of the Select Committee, but the House must accept that the debate has massive implications. *The Daily Telegraph* described it as a metaphor for our times. Perhaps it would be more appropriate to refer to it as a parable for our times. It was clearly a matter of careful and considered judgment which led the Select Committee to attribute £800 million Church losses to "unbelievable naivety" and to describe past speculation by the Church Commission as "foolish and reckless". The Government are accountable to the House for their failure to put protections in place for the Church, the clergy and the public.

In the 1989 White Paper, "Charities—A Framework for the Future", the then Home Secretary referred specifically to the Church Commission, saying:

"Their constitution and arrangements, approved in the past by Parliament, already contain satisfactory measures for ensuring that the objects of the trust are carried out and that their property is safeguarded, rendering Charity Commission involvement superfluous."

The Minister has, in effect, admitted that the then Home Secretary got it wrong and that the analysis was a poor excuse for exemption from the Charities Act.

Given that Ministers failed to protect the public in that regard, will the Minister give a firm undertaking that there will be a review of all other charities which have exempt status and that consideration will be given to whether the requirements of that status need to be changed. Is there not the strongest possible case for ensuring that the writ of the Charity Commission should operate in respect of exempt charities, at least in requiring evidence that accountability and standards are being maintained?

The Minister also owes the House an explanation of the double standards with which the Government appear to approach trusteeship and charitable involvement. The Minister will remember our debate in Committee on 29 March, when he failed to explain why the Government insist on maintaining the limit of a 75:25 split between broad-range and narrow-range investment for those charities that fall under the relevant provisions of the Trustee Investments Act 1961.

The Charity Commission considers an 85:15 split more appropriate for those charities which change their constitution and regulations. Where charities are free of those restrictions, the pattern dictated by prudence, as the duty of care still exists, generally leads to a 90:10 split. It has been estimated that the earlier 50:50 split was losing £450 million a year to charities and money continues to be lost to charitable causes by that regulation. Yet the Government maintain their tight regulatory stance despite the advice of their own deregulation task force that the requirement

"interferes unwarrantedly in trustees' exercise of their discretion, and prevents them from maintaining the real value of their assets and investment income".

The point of referring back to that debate is that it illustrates the muddle at the heart of Government thinking. In the case of the Church Commissioners, where massive investments have enormous importance for communities in every part of England and involve wider public interest, the Home Secretary in 1989 was guilty of massive complacency. In the case of some of the smaller trusts whose functions are important but touch more lightly on the general public interest, the Home Secretary hangs on to his right to meddle and interfere.

The House has a right to demand an explanation of Government thinking and for Ministers to account for their stewardship. If the Minister cannot explain Government thinking, it will become all the more urgent to debate wider issues in the near future. Where is the coherence of thinking in the Government? That question demands an answer.

Does the Minister accept the need to look again at the position of exempt charities? Yesterday in another place, his colleague Lady Blatch acknowledged the considerable powers given to the Charity Commissioners in sections 8, 9 and 11 of the Charities Act 1993. Those powers enable the Charity Commission to undertake inquiries, require information and use sanctions in regard to a charity or charities and to suspend trustees and even to appoint a receiver. The problem is that the key paragraph of section 8 contains the words:

"but no such inquiry shall extend to any exempt charity."

In view of the experience with the Church Commission, does the Minister now accept that the situation needs to change?

As exempt charities—I am deliberately referring to the class of which the Church Commission is a member—receive their status, their mandate and a significant element of their income as a result of decisions by the House, is there not a need for public accountability, including the publication of information and accounts and

a power for the Charity Commission to undertake inquiries in certain circumstances? There is a need for large, rich charities to act properly and to be subject to appropriate regulation. But will the Minister also concede that it is invariably the poorest groups and communities who suffer most when charities are improperly regulated or overseen? Surely the Government have a vested interest in the health and sensible regulation of the voluntary sector, particularly in relation to its financial management, so as to avoid pressure to pick up the tab for any failings.

The Minister referred to the effect of the Pensions Bill [Lords], but I would say that the relationship between Government and charities in this context is not especially clear—surely it, too, needs reviewing?

**Mr. Malcolm Wicks** (Croydon, North-West): How do I explain to my constituents the fact that charities such as Barnardo's and Age Concern, which have good reputations for helping the needy, are quite properly regulated by the Charity Commission and have to publish financial accounts, while so-called charities such as Eton and Winchester, which serve the privileged, are secret societies which do not have to account to the Charity Commissioners or publish their financial accounts?

**Mr. Michael:** My advice is that my hon. Friend would have great difficulty in explaining that with any conviction. It is also clear that there is a major difference between some exempt charities, such as the Church Commission, and a number of bodies such as those that my hon. Friend mentioned. They, too, are related to the churches and have their roots in the Christian community. There are certainly some serious anomalies.

I am the first to accept that one needs to be very careful about changing charity law in a way that may have unforeseen consequences. I simply say that in 1989 the Home Secretary claimed that there was no need to consider the position of the Church Commission as an exempt charity. It is clear that that was massively complacent and wrong, and that there is a need to review the situation now. I regret that the Minister does not seem willing to agree to instigate such a review.

Coming next to the position of retired clergy and the pensions of clergy who are still in office, I had hoped to hear that the Minister had gone into the matter in some detail and was able to give us a considerable amount of information about it. The remarks of the right hon. Member for Selby in this context were to some extent helpful, but I am not clear about the Government's response to the proposals emanating from the Church Commission. I am not sure whether the Government are satisfied that all concerned will be fully protected and well served by the new arrangements. There is considerable anxiety among the clergy and their parishioners about the situation described in the Select Committee report.

The Minister should also be aware of concerns for the welfare of the former wives of divorced clergy. I do not know whether that matter has received any attention, but I know that some hon. Members have been approached about it. No doubt the Minister and the right hon. Member for Selby are aware of the organisation Broken Rights, which is campaigning on behalf of the women concerned following the break-up of their marriages. I believe that my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead has given personal support to, and taken an interest in, the work of that group. What has the Minister done to satisfy himself that the rights and interests of these women have been protected? Many of them gave up their own careers and employment-related rights to support clergymen in their work, and have been left at a considerable personal disadvantage after working for many years as additional, unpaid curates.

Several of my right hon. and hon. Friends have contacted me to express their concerns about issues that we are covering in this debate. I refer to my right hon. Friend the Member for Bishop Auckland (Mr. Foster) and my hon. Friends the Members for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) and for Pendle (Mr. Prentice). They and others have been contacted by clergy with worries to express, and by members of the Church Commission—all of them anxious that this debate should look forward as well as looking closely at the lessons that need to be learnt from the past.

The Bishop of Bradford has acknowledged to colleagues in his area that the House could spend all its time on what he described as "justified but repetitious criticism", and on seeking scapegoats. If he reads *Hansard* he will find that our debate has not been like that—although it was a fair point to make.

The Select Committee has underlined the seriousness of some of the lapses that have occurred. Paragraph 114 of the report, for instance, states:

> "The growth of subsidiary companies and the choice of partners in such activities, which were designed to circumvent the restrictions placed on the Commissioners by their charitable status—a development which began in earnest under the late Sir Ronald Harris as First Estates Commissioner in the late 1970s—needs further investigation."

The right hon. Member for Selby said that there had been some examination of these issues following the Select Committee report, and I welcome that. I repeat that the public and this House have an interest in the fact that the way exempt charities operate generally needs to be re-examined in terms of the requirement for legislation. The Minister should undertake to look into this.

The investigation called for by the Select Committee should not be undertaken to find scapegoats; it should be done to learn from mistakes and to ensure that arrangements are put in place to prevent these disasters from ever being repeated. Assurances are not enough, in view of past complacency—but I shall not repeat what I have said about that.

The bishop made the point that a committee under his chairmanship has had the duty of bringing about the implementation of the recommendations of the Lambeth group. That important point was covered in more detail by the right hon. Member for Selby. Many recognise the need to establish a separate pension fund; indeed, the Select Committee report makes specific recommendations on that point. It was also acknowledged by the right hon. Member for Selby when discussing the agreement to establish a contributory fund. That is most welcome.

It is perhaps not unfair to remind the Minister that this leaves the police and fire services as the two great areas of difficulty with unfunded pension requirements, which in turn are creating enormous problems in the public service.

I am sure that the House will concur with the view that the pension fund so established should be independent of the commissioners. There is concern in some quarters to the effect that Parliament may set specifications which are too onerous when defining the assets required for such a fund, but the experience of recent years shows the dangers

*[Mr. Michael]*

inherent in failing to ring-fence pension funds and to ensure that they are adequate to meet all the claims that may be made on them. In view of the real dilemma facing the Church, it is important to face up to financial problems and not to cut corners when establishing the pension fund in a way which might cause pain in future. The right hon. Member for Selby sought to assure us on that point, and it is reassuring to know that it will be taken seriously.

Next, I come to the important point of difference between the views of the Select Committee and those of some leading figures in the Church Commission. The Select Committee notes at paragraph 115:

"The Church has two options concerning the nature of the proposed legislation . . . It can attempt to legislate by Measure, or it can propose a Bill."

Views expressed on behalf of the diocese of Sheffield to Members representing the area, including my hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth, urged us to encourage the processes recommended by the Lambeth group and expressed concern that a statutory pension fund containing every known safeguard in the interests of retired clergy might prove less flexible and more expensive than the commission's current proposals. It is important to understand that fear. It is certainly reasonable to ask Parliament not to be unreasonable, but it is also right for Parliament to make sure that adequate safeguards are in place and that the details of the new scheme, including its independence and accountability, are sound.

My hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead said that it was important not to cripple the Church Commissioners in their other work. I hope that similar observations from both sides of the House will act as some reassurance to the commissioners that there is no intention to be unreasonably onerous. But it is also important for them to realise that there is keen interest in these issues in this House, and that Members will need to be reassured on various points. That is why I concur with the Select Committee's view that change should be brought about by means of a Bill, not a Measure.

**Mr. Nicholas Baker:** Before the hon. Gentleman moves on, I remind him that he did not answer my question about exempt charities and their registration. It is clear from everything that he has said that he intends that that category of charity should be removed. I ask him to bear in mind that that approach will apply not only to the schools that have been mentioned but to the National Curriculum Council, the Curriculum Council for Wales, the School Examinations and Assessment Council, all universities, according to my understanding, further education councils and trustees of museums throughout the land. Enormous changes in bureaucratic requirements will be placed on them all. In the requirements that he envisages, the hon. Gentleman is suggesting that mistakes made by the commissioners, whose activities we are discussing, should lead to burdens being placed on great bodies which have not made similar mistakes.

**Mr. Michael:** That is without doubt the most foolish and incompetent intervention by a Minister that I have heard. It had nothing to do with the passage of my speech that I had reached and was clearly inspired by an adviser from Conservative central office rather than by professional advice. It arose from a total and deliberate misinterpretation of every comment that I have made.

**Mr. Jacques Arnold** (Gravesham): Stupid.

**Mr. Michael:** I agree with the hon. Gentleman. It was a stupid intervention.

The Minister will not gain anything by deliberate misinterpretation. He must not seek to recount words that I have not said. I simply ask him to accept that events that have taken place, as chronicled in the Select Committee's report, reveal failings on the part of an exempt charity and should give Ministers cause for concern. They should give Ministers reason to reconsider the Home Secretary's remarks at the time of the White Paper, when it was claimed that everything was so perfect in the regulation of the commissioners and of exempt charities that there was no need for change.

The Minister has fabricated the purport of my speech. That is disgraceful. It is an example of the way in which he and others, including the Prime Minister, have sought to invent things that have not been said by Opposition Members. Having made their inventions, they have gone around the country misrepresenting us. The Minister made a disgraceful intervention. I trust that I have answered it satisfactorily.

I return to the serious point to which the Minister seems not to wish to respond. It has nothing to do with his intervention. It is an important issue which was properly engaged in by the right hon. Member for Selby—namely, whether the issues that we are debating should be dealt with through a Measure or a Bill.

The right hon. Member for Selby suggested that there should be a debate in the Church. He appeared to take the view that the introduction of a Bill would inhibit debate in the Church about the provisions to be contained in whatever legislative Measure needed to be passed. It is clear from our exchanges that there should be consideration within the Church before a Bill comes to the House and that consideration in this place of that Bill should not be inhibited by our procedures.

The problem—I do not believe that the right hon. Member for Selby took it on board—is that we are dealing with something which goes beyond an ecclesiastical issue to embrace wider public interest issues. That is why it should come before the House in a form which allows full debate, including amendments. It should not be confined to a debate of one and a half hours. It should not be knocked on the head, as it were, at that stage. There must be real consideration of the issues. A debate of one and a half hours would not allow for proper accountability. We should not be satisfied with such a procedure when the issues are so serious.

**Mr. Jenkin:** May we take it that the hon. Gentleman's remarks constitute an undertaking on the part of his party that in the event of an accident of history which leads to his party, by some curious happenstance, forming a majority in the House in future, it would give time for legislation of the sort that he has in mind? May we take it that such a House would provide time for such a Bill, and that the hon. Gentleman is giving an undertaking on behalf of his party?

**Mr. Michael:** I am trying to respond to the serious issues raised by the Select Committee and by the remarks

of the right hon. Member for Selby. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not take it amiss if I take the Select Committee's report and the right hon. Gentleman's remarks rather more seriously than his own intervention. The right hon. Member for Selby has outlined the issues, including the question of what form of Measure should come before the House. It is—*[Interruption.]*

I said earlier, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that it would not be appropriate to respond to the issues before us by conducting a party political debate. It is regrettable that one or two Conservative Members seem to want to indulge in a bit of knockabout. The issues are serious. How do we—*[Interruption.]*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse):** Order. It is time that we cooled it and got on with the debate.

**Mr. Michael:** I am grateful, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The real issue is whether we should proceed through a Measure which allows us to have only a short debate. We would not be able to seek to make changes through the tabling of amendments. The alternative is a Bill.

The right hon. Member for Selby sought to find a way of proceeding by means of a Measure without running into the difficulties that private Bills often face. Given the seven years during which I was involved in the private Bill that provided for the Cardiff bay barrage scheme, I have come to understand some of the obstacles that can stand in the way of private legislation.

I appreciate that the right hon. Gentleman was tentative in his remarks. In effect, he would be asking the House through the Ecclesiastical Committee to pre-clear or pre-vet a piece of legislation before it came before the House to be debated for an hour and a half. I have some reservations about that. Accountability to the House and by the House would be severely limited. The right hon. Gentleman might need to suggest to his commissioner colleagues that such a course might not be acceptable to the House. That applies not only to the Government and the Opposition but to ordinary Members and the protection of their interests.

I am trying to respond to the wish of the right hon. Member for Selby that we should be creative rather than offering immediate solutions or giving undertakings. Indeed, I am not in a position to give undertakings. We should be creative, perhaps, in trying to find a way round the difficulties. It might be more appropriate to consider the ways in which we might deal with a private Bill and allow it to pass efficiently through the House by means of agreement on the necessary procedures. That might be the appropriate approach.

The right hon. Member for Selby has accepted that there is a problem. He recognises that there is a need to deal with legislation and at the same time to provide for accountability and full discussion. That might be a more creative approach. There have been suggestions in some quarters that a Bill should be brought forward by the Government, as a Government Bill or a hybrid Bill. That might be one way round the difficulty, but I suspect that it would raise more difficulties. It would certainly be appropriate for the Government to provide drafting assistance and other help to the commissioners in the introduction of a Bill given the public interest issues that are involved. It would be right for both sides of the House to deal with it expeditiously. The independence that is inherent in terms of charitable status surely means that the Measure should be a private Bill.

As I have said, we are dealing with important issues that need careful consideration. It is helpful that the right hon. Member for Selby has spoken his mind and encouraged an atmosphere of full debate. I hope that Ministers will respond positively. I am certain that we, the Opposition, would be willing to listen to concerns and to respond in a helpful way to means of reaching the conclusion that we all desire.

It is clear from the history of the subject that parliamentary scrutiny is needed to provide confidence and security for the future. That cannot be achieved through a Measure that is not open to amendment, and will receive only cursory scrutiny. At some point, the Minister should tell us what discussion he has had with the Church Commissioners about that.

Many of the required changes highlighted in the report are complex. The idea of a new relationship between the Charity Commission and exempt charities needs careful thought, and might appropriately be considered, on an urgent basis, by the Select Committee on Home Affairs.

The Minister appears to want to subject suggestions that we should consider the position to various interpretations. As I said at the beginning of my speech, I believe in "hastening slowly" in relation to change as it affects charities: if change is undertaken without proper discussion and thought, we may unintentionally disturb arrangements that have come into being over many years, and harm good practice in seeking to root out bad. We must be very careful before initiating legislative change. None the less, examining the position and the evidence, and asking questions, is an important element of the process. That is all that I have suggested, and I am disappointed that the Minister did not respond positively.

If the Minister sought to suggest earlier that I was proposing any action that would lead to a change in the status of any organisation as an exempt charity, he would be propagating a lie. I am sure that he would not wish to mislead either the House or the public; I hope that that makes the position as clear as it can be.

In relation to the Church Commission, there is a need to pursue the streamlining of procedures, the improvement of public accountability and other issues that have been given close attention in the Church. The House has a responsibility to ensure that changes brought about in practice and statute are adequate to restore confidence for the future. It is clear, however, that the events described in the Select Committee report are extremely serious—indeed, potentially devastating—and should remove for ever the temptation for the Church Commissioners or the Home Secretary to be complacent. The complacency shown by the Home Secretary in 1989 was seriously misplaced, and demonstrated once again the House's responsibility to scrutinise the Executive.

I hope that the Minister will take that clear message away with him, and that we shall soon debate substantive changes in a new Bill that will deal with all the important issues that have been raised today. I also hope that, in due course, the Minister will respond positively to wider issues relating to exempt charities.

*[Mr. Michael]*

6.52 pm

**Mr. William Powell** (Corby): The House owes a great debt to the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) and his Committee. I am delighted that we have a full opportunity to discuss the Committee's report this evening.

Time was when Parliament used to discuss matters relating to the Church of England rather more regularly and fully. It is often forgotten that when Lord Beaconsfield—Benjamin Disraeli—won his great general election victory in 1874, he had no legislative programme to hand for his first Queen's Speech; he did not come to office pledged to change all the existing laws, as modern Governments do. Because the parliamentary Session required some legislation to occupy hon. Members' time, he suggested to the Archbishop of Canterbury, Archbishop Tait—who was very concerned about matters relating to ritual and so forth—that it might be appropriate for the first Session to be taken up largely with ecclesiastical legislation.

Of course, there was chaos in the House for months. It was then decided that it would be very bad for the House to devote too much time to discussing legislation relating to the Church of England. Nevertheless, we should welcome a modest opportunity—extending beyond an hour and half—to reflect on what is a great scandal for the Church of England, and its consequences. The Church, too, owes a great debt to the hon. Member for Birkenhead and his Committee, not least for the moderate and considered way in which he introduced the debate.

The House also owes a debt to my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison). He has occupied his present office for some years, with the highest distinction but also with perfect parliamentary manners. It would be easy for someone occupying such a position to inflame the minds of a number of hon. Members, and for Church issues to spin out of control; my right hon. Friend's capacity—near-genius, indeed—to keep matters in perspective has been a marvellous parliamentary sight over the years. Although he will receive few plaudits in the House for his conduct, he deserves a considerable tribute. I am happy to tell him now how much I appreciate not only his speech this afternoon—which was very helpful in explaining what is now under way—but the general conduct of his office over a long period.

As I have said before, I am the son of a clergyman who was, for a time, a pensioner of the Church of England. I therefore have some personal knowledge of the way in which payment of both stipend and pension to the clergy has worked in practice. I am also vice-chairman of a body involving Members of both Houses, called "Church in Danger". Hon. Members who take an interest in such matters know that I am nothing if not a high Tory, and a high Tory always believes that the Church is in danger.

The great sermon preached before the Lord Mayor by Dr. Henry Sacheverell established the phrase "Church in danger". He so enraged the weak Government of the day that they decided to impeach him. A great impeachment trial took place in Westminster Hall, and the London crowds were much exercised by the good divine's sermon. In due course he was convicted, and his sentence was that the sermon should be burnt. Accordingly, the hangman—on Tower hill, I believe—burnt the good doctor's sermon. Of course, it subsequently became the best-selling sermon of all time, as it richly deserved to: those who preach that the Church is in danger not only tug at the consciences of high Tories such as me, but underline one of the most profound truths about the Church of England.

Only two or three years ago, a diocesan bishop told me that the Church today faced three great dangers. The first was the secularisation of society; we would all agree with that. The second was the danger of schism, which was sharply focused at the time by the ordination of women. The most profound danger, however, lay in the financial consequences of the scandal that the Select Committee has brought to the House's attention so effectively—although I see some truth in the claim that the Committee merely brought all the evidence together, and highlighted it for the benefit of a wider public audience than readers of the ecclesiastical newspapers and press releases. But it is certainly the case that the generous tribute which has been paid to the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury for the speed with which he acted when the scandal first came out was entirely appropriate.

There are those who say, and one still sees it in the columns of certain newspapers, that the Church Commissioners should apologise for what has happened, so I was delighted earlier this week to see the Bishop of Chelmsford, who for a short time was in the Gallery, reiterate in *The Times* that he had indeed, on behalf of the Church Commissioners, made a handsome apology to the Synod on a number of occasions. There is absolutely no question but that the Church Commissioners generally have admitted, and admitted handsomely, that serious errors of judgment were made. It is on the consequences of those serious errors of judgment that I want to make a few remarks this evening.

I would say, in parentheses, that the Church Commissioner who was most responsible for the scandal, Sir Douglas Lovelock—we have, alas, heard too little from him about his own personal responsibility in this—was a distinguished public servant. But his undoubted distinction as a public servant came as a tax collector, not as an investor of public funds. I hope that those who are responsible for the selection of appropriate people to act as commissioners and trustees of Church funds look to those with relevant experience in the handling of these matters, not merely to whether they have had a distinguished public career which has been brought to a conclusion by the compulsory age of retirement for our civil servants.

One of the main issues that has arisen here this evening concerns the question whether there should be legislation to deal with the consequences or whether, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby said, speaking on behalf of the Church Commissioners and, I think, on behalf of the Church of England at this stage, it should be by way of Measure.

I entirely support the remarks made by the hon. Members for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) and for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael). There are wider public issues in the reforms that must now be made than exclusively ecclesiastical ones, and the Church Commissioners and the Synod must understand that the legislation is bound to involve wider public issues than lie strictly speaking in their remit. Therefore, the agreement whereby Parliament would stay out of Church matters has to be read in the light of the fact that there will be Church

matters that legitimately and genuinely involve wider considerations. At that point, Parliament is the appropriate body to handle it, not the Church.

Secondly, the machinery by which any kind of consultation could exist for what my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby suggested is, alas, pitifully inadequate. The Ecclesiastical Committee is not a committee of Parliament. It is a statutory committee established by Act of Parliament, and it can carry out only those functions laid down in the 1919 statute. Most of us who serve on the Ecclesiastical Committee—a number of us are here present this evening—think that that statute is in need of urgent revision, and I would be the first to make that point.

I hope that my right hon. Friend, in talking to those with whom he is involved, will say that the time has now come for a committee to be established between Parliament and the Synod which would revise the functions that are carried out by the Ecclesiastical Committee. The only duty we have on the Ecclesiastical Committee is to decide whether legislation is expedient. In the best legislative tradition, the word "expedient" is simply not defined, and not one of us really has any sensible idea of what it might mean.

Leaving that aside, the Ecclesiastical Committee cannot amend and, if it recommends amendments, and those amendments are subsequently accepted by the Synod, the Synod has to begin the whole legislative process again because the Measure that it has sent to the Ecclesiastical Committee, and ultimately to Parliament, is incapable of amendment when it has completed its entire passage in the Synod. Therefore, the Ecclesiastical Committee can make only recommendations and, in due course, both Houses have to decide what they make of it, if they do so at all.

In order for the Ecclesiastical Committee to play a more meaningful role, it would be necessary to revise the legislation under which the Ecclesiastical Committee sits, and that would require a fresh Act of Parliament. It must be obvious to the House, as I outline these procedures, that that is not a way forward.

Therefore, I hope that my right hon. Friend will not only reflect on what has been said—I am sure that he will—but that he will be quite firm with those with whom he works in the Church Commissioners and in the Synod and say that they must really pull themselves together and recognise that this is a matter pre-eminently involving the Church today which must be dealt with properly by a Bill before Parliament because the issues themselves are wider than ecclesiastical issues. That surely is conclusive.

Having said that, I want to move on to some of the consequences of the scandal. Whatever the sum of money that has been forgone may be at the end of the day, there is no doubt whatever that there is a financial hole which is of considerable importance for the future. There are now more clergy pensioners than there are clergy. That is an entirely new situation, but it shows the financial burden which now has to be met in order to deal with pensioners. The truth of the matter is that that balance is likely to move more in favour of pensioners in the future.

We are already experiencing the consequences of that. I called upon the incumbent of one parish in my constituency the other day and he told me that, before he came to the parish, there was a four-and-a-half-year interregnum—four and a half years without a resident clergyman. There were, of course, plenty of retired clergy prepared to conduct divine worship, but that is only part of a clergyman's duty. A clergyman's duty extends way beyond the duty to be in church on Sundays and to conduct divine worship. There is the pastoral work, work to be done in Church schools, and much else besides, and none of that was done because of the long interregnum. It is not surprising that the congregation fell apart.

Another parish in my constituency has a large population of rising 9,000. It may be that there are parishes in our big cities which have a larger nominal population than that, but in Northamptonshire that is a large parish. That parish has been without a clergyman since August last year and, as I understand it, there is no imminent prospect of one arriving. Of course, there are clergyman to conduct divine worship on Sundays, but in a parish of 9,000 the pastoral work needs to continue. The reason why there is no clergyman at the moment is that there is no money to pay him. The phasing through of appointments, lengthening those interregnums all the time, is one of the most serious consequences which is already being experienced.

There are those—my father was one of them—who thought that after world war two the most pressing problem that the Church faced was a re-endowment and that there should have been a major effort to boost the overall funds of the Church. A brilliant administrator such as Archbishop Fisher may have been the right person to carry out such a reform. Unfortunately, Archbishop Fisher allowed himself to be drawn into the cul de sac of canon law reform, and most of his time at Lambeth spent on administrative matters was taken up with matters that would now be regarded as being of comparatively little importance. It would have been a great help if the urgency of financial reform, which the projection of pensions had made plain would be a major charge on the Church, had been recognised. That opportunity was missed and today we face the consequences.

The Bishop of Durham is conducting a major inquiry into the Church's future needs. The bishop is not the person that most people think of as the Bishop of Durham but rather his successor Bishop Turnbull. The report of that inquiry is eagerly awaited, and I have no doubt that it will contain important provisions for the future.

I should like to make a plea on behalf of the rural parish which is an important part of the Church of England. My father was a rural clergyman all his life. Nowadays one village is being added to another, until up to six villages may be joined. That happens because of financial difficulties.

As the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth said, one of the glories of the Church of England has been the resident clergyman. But in far too many places the clergy are no longer resident: they frequently live 10 or more miles from their parishes. That is not healthy, and I hope to see it reversed, not least because so much of the strength of the Church was in the rural areas. I do not exclude the importance of urban areas, but the Church's strength in the countryside has been of the upmost importance in terms of the loyalty and affection of the people of England.

Not only are there many parishes with no resident clergymen but I have found, as may have other hon. Members, that the vicarage, in so far as it is used, is sometimes merely an office. Married female clergy tend to live with their husbands somewhere else. More than one parish in my constituency have active vicarages, but

*[Mr. William Powell]*

they are merely offices, because the woman priests may live 16 to 20 miles away and come over for the day if that is appropriate. I am talking about weekday work and not about conducting divine worship on Sundays. The clergy are no longer the residents that they used to be.

Some savings can and must be made in Church finances. I shall start at the top. The Church of England has far too many bishops. Suffragan bishops were instigated to carry out confirmations, of which there were many in those days. Of course the diocesan bishop had other functions. I find the world of Parson Woodford and Trollope much more agreeable than many aspects of today's Church. It was the function of the diocesan bishop to attend the House of Lords and support the Government there. He had to make improving sermons before Parliament on occasions of national importance, such as our deliverance from the gunpowder plot. They conducted large confirmations. Archbishop Wake used to sit the whole day and confirm perhaps 10,000 people one after another.

In more modern times suffragan bishops did that and frequently combined that office with the office of archdeacon. The income came from the archdeaconry and not as a special income to the suffragan. Every diocesan bishop seems to think that he needs a suffragan. In the dear old diocese of Peterborough, of which I am obviously so fond, our last diocesan bishop had an assistant bishop. Our present bishop, splendid man that he is as we both know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, felt that he needed to be the last diocesan to get a suffragan. But he did not need one.

When I tell suffragans that they are unnecessary, they are very offended and say that their jobs now are to chair committees and visit clergymen in distress and so on. I have no doubt that there are more clergymen in distress than there used to be, but archdeacons and rural deans could visit them. Perhaps there are now more archdeacons and rural deans in distress. There is a plethora, an ever-expanding number, of committees, as we see in the Synod, which is producing more and more legislation.

A miscellaneous provisions measure came to the House a few days ago. It contained some tidying-up provisions to which nobody took any great exception and there seemed to be no great urgency about them. However, one provision was unnecessary and undesirable. It was that the regius professor of ecclesiastical history at Oxford university should no longer be a clergyman. But the clergy need to have ecclesiastical historians among them, and there must be an incentive for Church historians to become ordained. If there is a regius professorship at Oxford, so much the better. It would be a great misfortune if the Bench of Bishops contained people who knew nothing about Church history or the history of the Church of England.

We expect bishops to have many admirable qualities. We expect them to be godly and saintly men, to say their prayers and mean them, to understand something of pastoral life, and be able to teach the scriptures. Those are important matters. I do not regard the management of money and the Church's finances as among the most important qualities that are needed by bishops. That is why the Church Commissioners must be reformed. This vast body of people all trying to get in on the act and all of them spawning committees here, there and everywhere has become inappropriate to our age. Let us leave the management of money not to bishops and archdeacons, but to people who have experience in those areas and are able to carry out their functions, which must be tightly drawn in law, in a proper and appropriate way.

There are also too many dioceses in this country. Some of them are enormous and the strain upon the diocesan bishop may be sufficient to require him to have one suffragan. The bishopric of London has an enormous number of parishes and, alas, a great many problems. The diocese of Chelmsford is a huge burden on its diocesan bishop. My father was a canon of Chelmsford and at least two of the four bishops of Chelmsford I knew suffered broken health as a consequence of having a diocese which runs from Dagenham and East Ham all the way to the Suffolk border and contains a huge variety of circumstances.

Some dioceses have three counties, but the diocese of Portsmouth seems to be just the Isle of Wight and the city of Portsmouth and not much else. That is far too small in this age. We need to look hard to see whether the structure of the dioceses that we have inherited is appropriate for the age in which we live and whether substantial savings could be made from reorganisation. Some hon. Members have said that every reorganisation leads to increased costs. That factor will have to be considered.

The upkeep of our cathedrals, many of which are among the finest buildings in the world, is of considerable national interest, but I suspect that one or two of them need not be cathedrals at all. That is certainly the case with the cathedral church of Chelmsford. I am sorry to identify it as such—I see that my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) is present—but it was the parish church of Chelmsford before the decision was taken to upgrade it into a cathedral, and it does look more like a distinguished parish church than one of the glories of European architecture and heritage.

The consequences of the scandal will be felt throughout the Church for decades to come; there is no escaping from that fact. The people in the pews—the people who matter—are of course appalled by what they have discovered. Serious errors have been made. I have been delighted to learn from my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby about what has been and is being done to put matters right, but I urge him not only to reflect on what he has said tonight, but to do what he can, at his persuasive best, to convince his colleagues in the Church Commissioners and in the Synod to pay serious attention to this evening's discussions.

The only way to proceed which will command the confidence of the public generally and the Church of England public in particular is to introduce an Act of Parliament, however inconvenient that may be to people who would like to put the matter away in a little corner and not let too much light be thrown on what is going on.

7.21 pm

**Mr. Simon Hughes** (Southwark and Bermondsey): During the speech of the hon. Member for Corby (Mr. Powell), I was beginning to think that I was a student attending a lecture about the management of the modern Church and its historical perspectives. As those of us who have been in the House and served on the Ecclesiastical Committee with the hon. Gentleman know, he speaks from great experience, knowledge and commitment.

It think that this is a unique occasion. I do not remember an occasion in the House when a whole day was set aside, from the end of questions and statements until the Adjournment debate, to discuss Church matters. Suddenly, we have been able to focus our attention on that. Even when we debated the ordination of women, we started later in the day and did not have so much time allocated.

**Mr. Frank Field:** We had one and a half hours.

**Mr. Hughes:** Indeed.

Normally, we discuss the matter only when a bit of Church or Ecclesiastical Committee business comes to this place for approval or disapproval and, conventionally, one and a half hours is allocated. For no other reason, therefore, we should pay tribute to the fact that the Select Committee on Social Security, chaired by the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), decided, I suspect at his suggestion originally, to consider this matter of wide general concern. That consideration happens to be within the context of the management of the Church of England, and principles that the House has been concerned about in relation to a range of issues have been applied.

The fact that the Committee has considered an aspect of the management of an important institution's finances, that the matter is considered here, and that we have time to debate it, is important. The debate is specifically about the management of the finances of the national Church, the Church of England, but it relates to many other parallel concerns and debates that we are having. It is timely because a debate is taking place in Committee on the management and provision of pensions in the context of Government pensions legislation. That Bill, which has been through the other place, deals with some of the same issues: whether providers of pensions provide adequately for their employees and how pension fund assets are managed.

Two recent examples have brought those matters into the open and into public debate. They are not parallel, but they have similarities. The first was in the private sector and relates to the way in which Maxwell employees, to put it directly, were ripped off by their employer and placed in huge difficulty. All hon. Members have received representations from their constituents who have found themselves in difficulty. As someone who represents many print workers, I had many such representations.

The second example involves pensioners of the Church of England, that is, the retired clergy. They found, not that their employers—members of the Church—had directly ripped them off, but that those to whom they entrusted the management of finances ripped them off. They did not do so directly; they did so through incompetent, poorly advised, mistaken, foolish investments. The debate centres on that.

**Mr. Field:** Does the hon. Gentleman recall that the same Select Committee recommended to the Government that the Goode committee should be established to recommend a Pensions Bill, and that, when the Government came to it, it was such a complicated matter that we now have one of the biggest Bills to be introduced in this Parliament? The Government are trying to debate the Bill openly, and are not getting it through in one and a half hours.

**Mr. Hughes:** I remember that. That is another tribute to the hon. Gentleman's Committee. That matter slightly predates the present debate. I have considered the Pensions Bill. I had a briefing with my noble Friend Baroness Seear, who dealt with the matter in the other place the other day. That Bill is hugely important; such matters are complex but important.

One of the things that most affects people's sense of security throughout their lives is what the state of their pensions will be and how secure that is. People have a great interest in knowing how their pension managers are doing. They are big players in the national corporate financial scene. Many of us have experience of the fact that many of the matters that concern our constituents are determined by the decisions of pension funds and trustees, who are now large players and investors.

I should like to make some brief, passing references to the speech of the hon. Member for Corby. He got into a fairly extended consideration of how the Church could reorganise its affairs. It caused me to think of two things. First, there is a danger in the Church, as in the rest of society, that we shall start thinking that administration is all, and that we shall require the people at the top of the professional tree in the Church to have the same skills as those required of the people at the top of the professional tree in other sectors of life, that is, managers, accountants and financiers. But those at the top in the Church may not have those skills. Secondly, one complaint that is made all the time is that the best-paid people in the health service are the administrators, financiers and accountants, not the health professionals. The same is true in the Church.

This is a much smaller matter but, as someone whose sister-in-law—the hon. Member for Corby may not like this—is an ordained priest in the diocese of Chelmsford, may I say that my brother had to follow her to her house, which is in the parish. He had to live where she is living, as it were, on the job. She does not live away from the place. It does not necessarily follow that women clergy or women priests will, by necessity, live further away; it depends on the family's choice. My sister-in-law lives in the middle of her community, which very much welcomes that.

I welcome the report and all its recommendations. I welcome the recommendation that the Church Commissioners should be a smaller, businesslike body. It is nonsense that the Church Commissioners are a huge body of people who, in many respects, are only nominal members. In his earlier intervention, the hon. Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) asked questions that related to the fact that more than one hon. Member serves on that body. The Prime Minister is one of its members. All the diocesan bishops are members. It is complete management nonsense that that huge body of people should be responsible, in any serious sense, for the management of these finances. As the Select Committee recommends, the Church Commissioners should be a small body of people who can get on with that, and who see it as their particular contribution to the management of the Church.

Clearly, it is proper—I hope that this will be picked up in Bishop Turnbull's commission—that a pension fund should be established and that it should take in money and pay out Church pensions. There is a management proposal that there should be a single board dealing with paying in and paying out; that is sensible. The people who know what the revenue is should decide what the outgoings are; that is logical. The important point has been made—this

*[Mr. Hughes]*

was touched on by the hon. Member for Corby—that this whole business is not only about learning the lessons for the future, but about restoring the confidence of the contributors—the people in the pews. They need to be confident that when they pay their money in, it will not be thrown away. There is no incentive for people to give generously if they do not have confidence in those who are managing their money.

There is also the question of how the matter should be addressed in terms of legislation. There is the debate about the procedures that take place in the Synod and here and about the interrelationship between the decision-making processes of the Church and the decision-making process of Parliament.

It is self-evident that the Church misuses, misspends or misinvests its inherited wealth at its peril. There are likely to be dire consequences in rural and in urban areas if the assets of the Church are wasted by bad investment. The Church has a lot of updating to do to get its investment policy right and to get the accountability of its investment policy and processes correct.

The Church Commission was set up so that there could be a pooling of resources by which the poor parts of the Church could be assisted by the affluent parts of the Church. In those days, the system was intended to benefit urban, inner-city missions because the wealth lay in the rural parishes or in the slightly less urban parishes. It will be a tragedy if the consequence of this lack of investment is that there are not only not enough funds with which to pay the pensions, but few funds to go to support the Church in other places. The Church needs to be very conscious of the calamitous results of such a significant waste of its money.

It is always difficult to know how best to invest. The hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown) has made it clear that one needs people with appropriate skills to ensure that the best financial and investment decisions are made. The hon. Member for Corby made the similar point that one should appoint not only people from the list of the great and the good, but people who know exactly how to deal with the matters in question.

As everyone has admitted responsibility, it is not now appropriate to go over in large measure whose fault it was. The archbishop has accepted responsibility, technically quite properly, and has tried to ensure that the matter is dealt with fairly. I intervened in the speech of the right hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) to make the point about openness. I believe that, when the Turnbull commission reports and when we look at the structure again, we shall realise that there needs to be a more efficient, small, compact managerial organisation dealing with those matters and one that is much more open and accountable to the body of the Church. Although secret decision-making and a secret investment policy may be fine for private financial deals and in competing against other people, the subscribers and beneficiaries must, in their own interests, be allowed to see what is going on and must be convinced that the Church is making proper decisions.

An issue lies underneath all this. The Church must face up to the fact that it is running out of historical assets with which to support not just its present ministry, but its retired clergy. The position is changing from having the money available, with some to spare, to having insufficient money to meet all the pension bills. That is why the whole issue is being addressed. I welcome what the right hon. Member for Selby said about the fact that the Church has been working out the problem, and that it has just come to an initial formulation for the way in which it will raise the money for pensions in future. The state faces the same issue. The welfare state will not have enough available from historical, accumulated moneys to pay state pensions indefinitely. The move towards occupational pension schemes is entirely right because it is necessary and because that is the only way in which we shall raise the money. The Church must do the same.

The Church of England needs to face up to the conclusion that most of the rest of the Churches have faced up to. In the free Churches and, to a large extent, in the Roman Catholic Church, congregations pay their ministers. I do not make my next point in the belief that I am any better than anyone else. The old tradition of the Church was that one tithed to pay for a variety of things in the Church, thus furthering the ministry of the Church. The money raised from congregations—I am talking not about the widow with her mite, but about people with considerably more money—is minuscule. My diocese of Southwark has the best level of giving of any according to the most recent records, but still it is minuscule.

If people really want the Church's ministry to work, they must covenant and give, and they must give in proportion to their salaries and incomes. Many people who go to church have large salaries and incomes, but the Church does not, in many cases, see much of that money. The churches have to make a contribution towards the diocese; they begrudge it and they think that it is too big. I am never sure whether they boost their Easter electoral roll or reduce it to affect their levy.

If the Church here is to face up to its responsibilities, as much as the Church in the rest of the world has, it must raise the resources to pay for its clergy parish by parish and community by community. There will, of course, have to be cross-subsidy, and the rich places should take responsibility for paying for the Church in poorer places. None the less, there must be much more self-sufficiency in the Church, not least because the historical assets of the Church will not be sufficient to keep up with rising bills, including the rising pensions bill. The Church needs to face up to that fact soon; it is a real challenge, especially in times of financial difficulty.

There needs to be more democratic accountability of the management of the Church and of the Church financiers. We also need to address the question of parliamentary and state accountability. One can go one of two ways. One can say that it is entirely inappropriate for the state to have any responsibility and that the Church should be allowed to get on with its own affairs. At the moment, the Church puts things to us on a take-it-or-leave-it basis—the phrase used by the right hon. Member for Selby.

Alternatively—this was the burden of the case put forward by the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael)—one can say that there is no reason why the Church should be any less open to scrutiny than any other organisation. I take that view, and I take the view that we should be as willing and ready to scrutinise the interests of our constituents who are pensioners of the Church, as opposed to pensioners of

Robert Maxwell, as we are to scrutinise the interests of any other group in society. We must therefore have procedures for doing that.

Outside, it may seem that we are discussing semantics when we debate whether the Church should propose Measures that we take or leave and negotiate beforehand. The hon. Member for Corby was right to say that, even, with the flexibility that the Ecclesiastical Committee has shown in the past, it is inappropriate for us to debate a draft Measure. The conclusion is, therefore, that, if we have the power to scrutinise the structure of the Church Commissioners—whatever structure the Church decides to adopt—as we should scrutinise all other charities, whether exempt or not, we should use that power by means of primary legislation.

I support those who, like the Select Committee, argued that we should have Bills. The Church could have its debates and then send legislation to us. It is a matter of ensuring not only that we listen to what the Church says, but that the Church pays heed to what is regarded as good practice for every pension fund and for every citizen. The Turnbull commission should take that into account.

I guess that what will happen after the debate is that we shall await the outcome of the Turnbull commission. The two debates will coincide, as it were, in terms of looking at the structures of the Church. That is the right way forward.

Many of us hope that the Turnbull commission will be bold, not timid. In the commission's last weeks, as it nears drafting its final report, I hope that the new Bishop of Durham and his colleagues will address the need for the Church to be seen to be organised in a way that minimises bureaucracy, maximises democracy and accountability, but, above all, releases people to get on with the job of the Church. That is a mission not to the people in the pews—if they are in the pews, we are nine tenths of the way there—but to the people who are not in the pews at all and who ought to be much nearer to the Church than they are.

The history of the investments that prompted today's debate has not done the Church any good. I hope that the Church has learned the lesson of that mistake and put that sad saga behind it. Once it has done that, the Church needs to be much less defensive.

I was with two friends—one a Christian, one not—in Rochester cathedral on a Sunday afternoon. They pointed out to me a notice on a board in the cathedral that started by saying that Church of England attendance was not declining. That is hardly a bullish, confident start to a statement about the current state of the Church of England.

The Church must be much more confident about itself, much less defensive, and much more concerned to be the missionary Church that, in many parts of world, it still is, but that the good old Church of England often does not appear to be in Britain. That is why I favour the disestablishment of the Church; that would release us to be a more missionary Church and less careful about being defensive.

Irrespective of whether hon. Members agree with that, I hope that the Church learns its lesson, puts its house in order, modernises its structures and gets on with its real job. That is not to defend the institutional old Church, but to manage itself so that it can deliver the unchangeable and eternal new message, which is about reaching individuals so that Christ can change their lives. That is the principal concern of the Church, and the sooner we can be sure that it is not spoiling that message by bad internal management and that it has its house in order, the better the Church will do.

7.44 pm

**Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown** (Cirencester and Tewkesbury): I take part in this debate with a sense of sadness. At a time when the congregations of the Church of England are at their historic low point and when some of us, at any rate, who are members of the Church of England, feel that the Church is not giving a sufficient moral and spiritual lead, to heap this financial crisis—as, inevitably, it is—on to that dilemma is a cruel double blow.

I must pay a great tribute to the Social Security Committee; I pay one, too, to its Chairman for the measured way that he introduced his excellent report without which, undoubtedly, we would not be debating this extremely serious issue.

I should like to start where my hon. Friend the Member for Corby (Mr. Powell), in a sense, left off. I hasten to add that I shall not speak at such great length. My remarks will be extremely brief. Let us think about the consequences of this financial crisis, as I should like to call it. A substantial sum—mention has already been made of over £700 million—will have to be set aside for a properly funded pension scheme. That will leave the general fund in the Church Commissioners' hands severely depleted for all their other activities.

Those other activities, of course, include the day-to-day stipends of existing clergy. They also include the upkeep of a considerable number of churches. Their upkeep has to be met by smaller and smaller congregations, which are therefore contributing less and less, not only to the upkeep of the churches but to the Church's giving to other worthy causes, in this country and throughout the world.

The inevitable consequence is that there will be less money to fund the stipends of individual clergymen. That means that congregations will be asked to pay more and, because they are declining, the number of clergy will decline. As that declines, so will the number of congregations. It is an ever-decreasing circle that, somehow, we must find a way of breaking.

The consequence of the declining number of clergy will be that the number of parishes administered by each clergyman will grow. In my group of parishes in Gloucestershire, we have an extremely dedicated parson who looks after five parishes with four parish churches and manages to hold a service in each every Sunday. I do not know how he manages to drive between them in the time that he has available. He is extremely ably assisted by his lay reader wife. The consequence of that crisis will be that his and other tasks will become ever-more fraught. If he is being threatened with at least another three parishes to add to his existing ones, he will certainly not be able to hold a service in every church in every parish, every week. That will be an extremely sad day for the parishes involved.

Almost every mistake in the book was made in the financial management that we are discussing. Unfortunately, one or two of the chief executives are still in place, notably the chief executive of the pension side in the Church. The Select Committee report makes it clear

*[Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown]*

that it was he who did, to use the report's words, a back-of-an-envelope calculation of the change in pensions policy to give clergymen and the widows of clergymen a pension increase to two thirds of final salary. That gave rise, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) has said, to a threefold increase in the cost of pension contributions between 1981 and 1991. Over that same period, the benefits of that pension scheme increased 17 per cent. above the retail price index. The intent is laudable but it is somewhat foolish if it cannot be afforded.

**Mr. Jenkin:** It is important to emphasise that the *gentleman in question was not responsible for taking that* decision. We spent some time in Committee questioning the source of that decision. What is most disturbing about what we discovered is that decisions of that magnitude simply emerged from a consensus, perhaps driven a bit by the Synod, perhaps driven a bit by some of the commissioners. Those momentous decisions became policy without anybody formulating a paper to consider all the consequences and going through a proper process of decision making. It is wrong to cast blame on individuals in the way that my hon. Friend's comment might be interpreted.

**Mr. Clifton-Brown:** I am grateful for that clarification. Nevertheless, the individual concerned has had professional financial training and is involved in a firm that gives pensions advice. He is therefore expected to know something about such matters.

The lesson that must be learnt from the whole debacle is that we need a proper accountable, open, democratic system. As I said to the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), part of what has gone wrong in the past is that too many of the sort of decisions that we are discussing have been made in secret by very few people. If the House is to remain the scrutiny body for Church affairs, we need a system whereby the House can obtain all the information necessary in order properly to scrutinise the decisions. That is what has gone wrong in the past.

I am not a Johnny-come-lately to the subject: I have been asking questions on Church affairs since I first entered the House in 1992. Up until then, I do not believe that the House had the necessary information to know what was going wrong. It was not until the 1991 report that we even knew about the disastrous investment in Kent.

I hope that lessons will be learned. We must have a proper, democratically accountable system and proper accounts. After all, the National Audit Office had been asking for properly consolidated accounts for six years prior to 1991 before it eventually got hold of them. Had those accounts been available, it is conceivable that some of the mistakes would have been spotted earlier.

**Mr. Jenkin:** That is certainly true.

**Mr. Clifton-Brown:** I thank my hon. Friend for that guidance, because he was a member of the Committee that produced the excellent 1991 report.

Undoubtedly, wrong decisions were made. We need a proper financial structure. I should like to see the results of the quarterly meetings at least summarised in the annual report. I should like to see proper accounts showing the performance of each section of the Church Commissioners' fund. We owe it to past clergymen to make a decision as soon as possible to set up a proper actuarially funded pension scheme. There can be nothing more important than the obligation to assure retired members of the clergy that their pensions will be honoured in full. We owe it to them to make sure that we get a decision as soon as possible.

It is now two years since the Lambeth group identified the fact that pensions were not properly funded and pointed out that no fund was earmarked for pensions within the overall Church Commissioners' funds. I do not believe that the Church Commissioners even knew fully what the pension obligations were each year. We owe it to those clergy to set up an independent actuarially funded scheme for past pensions as well as to provide for the pension liabilities of present clergymen. That is where it may be prudent not to fund in full, because nobody knows what those liabilities will be. As the hon. Member for Birkenhead has already said, it may be prudent to set aside a fund with the obligation on Church Commissioners that if there is a shortfall in the fund, it can be made up at a later date. If that is not done, there may be overfunding now and the other obligations of the Church may suffer.

Lessons have to be learned. We need proper systems and proper professionals in place. My right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) has never said whether proper pensions management advice has been sought. I shall be pursuing that in questions. I am not talking about property advisers, to whom I have talked and who I know do an excellent job, and I am not talking about actuarial advice on how much money needs to be set aside. I am talking about pension fund management, which I mentioned in my intervention to my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby. We need to know how well each section of the fund is doing.

When I was involved in property fund management as a chartered surveyor, the portfolios of all our clients were measured against an index. We could tell any of our pension fund managers how their fund was doing compared to a basket of other funds. We could probably find a fund similar to that of the Church, where some 50 per cent. or so of its investment was in property and we would be able to say how well the Church fund was doing compared to that similar fund.

It is essential that, before long, we have a proper annual report with accounts from the Church Commissioners so that we can see how the fund is doing. As the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) has said, it is essential that trust in the people who will manage the Church finances in the future is built up. That is vital if we are to encourage people to give more. I have no doubt that Bishop Turnbull's commission will be urging all of us who are members of the Church Commission to give more. If we are to give more, as our ancestors have done throughout history, we must not be suspicious about the way the funds will be managed. That is one of the most important things for the Church Commissioners to achieve. They must convince all of us in the Church who might be thinking of giving money that it will be properly managed.

I am delighted to have been able to take part in the debate. This is a difficult moment for the Church but, historically, all institutions have their ups and downs and I have no doubt that, given proper leadership and participation from its members—it has had that in the

past—the Church can again rebuild the moral and spiritual lead that the nation desperately needs. Our spiritual stock is going downhill. If we are to stem the increased rate of divorce and the break-up of families, we must have that proper spiritual and moral leadership. I look to our leaders in the Church to remedy all the things that I have mentioned.

7.56 pm

**Ms Kate Hoey** (Vauxhall): I welcome the report and its recommendations. I was a member of the Select Committee but I joined only in the latter part of the inquiry. I want to pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) for the way in which he chairs that Committee and for the way in which he handles it generally. In spite of the party political differences, the debates that take place in that Committee are conducted in a way that uses those differences in the best interests of all our constituents. My hon. Friend's speech was interesting and made clear the way forward following the report. Much of the excellent report is due to my hon. Friend's consistent and dedicated interest in this subject.

I agree with what has been said by my hon. Friend and other hon. Members who have mentioned opening up the processes in the Church and making it more accountable. There is a great deal of mystique around the Church of England and the Church Commissioners and that must be got rid of. If the report does anything to open up the debate within the congregations across England, it will be extremely useful.

The report refers to Parliament's somewhat laissez-faire attitude to the Church of England and to the way in which it deals with it in the House. If we are to have an established Church—there is a great deal of debate about that—it is important that Parliament takes its involvement more seriously. As my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) said, there is a public interest and it must take into account the relevance and importance of the Church in England, particularly in the inner-city areas. Just as the numbers who attend some of our debates in Parliament do not reflect the importance of the work of Parliament, so the size of the congregations on Sundays does not reflect the importance of the work of the Church. It is important that we do not measure what the Church is doing by the number of people who go to churches on a Sunday.

It is necessary to have a Bill rather than a Measure, because we must have this important debate. I understand that my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth could not commit the next Labour Government to introducing a Bill and could not give a timetable. However, I am confident that we shall find a way to allow much greater debate than just one and a half hours on a Measure.

I should like to pay tribute to one of my constituents—the Archbishop of Canterbury—who acted in a way that showed clear leadership once the results of the inquiries by John Plender in the *Financial Times* were published in July 1992. Once that "loss" of £800 million on property speculation was revealed, the Archbishop of Canterbury acted promptly. I very much welcome, as the right hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) did, the fact that independent auditors will be looking at the Ashford development. The Committee found it most disturbing that the Church could even think of getting involved in such a development. It is crucial that independent auditing is introduced.

The subject has not been mentioned tonight, but the Church must consider the whole question of morality and ethics; whether the Church should be involved, and to what extent it should be involved, in property development, speculative developments and in developments which may be perfectly acceptable in other areas of life, but which may not be the ways that the average churchgoing member of the public thinks that the Church should invest. I hope that the archbishop will identify his role in that matter and offer some leadership. We should consider not only that matter when the Church makes a bad investment, but whether the ends generally justify the means.

When Sir Douglas Lovelock gave evidence to the Committee, he asked a question about the end justifying the means and whether the Church took anything to do with ethics into account. It was interesting that he said that the Commissioners were

"there to support the parochial ministry of the Church of England and they should strain every nerve to do it, and that is what we were doing . . . in pursuit of that, we did things which subsequently have seemed to be imprudent".

It is not good enough to question afterwards reasons for involvement in investments which may not be ethical. The Church should draw up criteria after a debate among its congregation. I also believe that there was complacency about the losses, as some hon. Members have said. Other—albeit slightly different—pension funds did much better and were much more capable of dealing with the recession than the Church.

I want to comment on the consequence of that debacle and on what has happened in inner-city areas. In my own inner-city area of Lambeth, there are many churches, but each church does a great deal more than providing a service on a Sunday. One cannot underestimate the work done in areas of high deprivation, poverty and very bad housing, where there are high numbers of young, single mums, few play spaces for children and all sorts of other problems that result from living in the inner city. The work done by the churches and the clergy in such areas is greatly appreciated. The appreciation may not always be shown by more people attending church, but, like many other things, if it were not there, it would be greatly missed.

Some churches in particular have to deal with homelessness. St. John's at Waterloo spends a great deal of time helping people who sleep right next to the church in the bullring. Indeed, every night the church steps are covered with people sleeping rough. St. John's is also involved in youth projects and works in a multiracial community. All those activities are vital in a poorer area where people are not able to contribute as much as they might in other areas, although of course some people contribute greatly.

I was interested to hear the right hon. Member for Selby talk about the transitional arrangements for poorer dioceses. It is absolutely crucial that areas such as the one that I represent are treated differently. Some hon. Members may have received a letter today from the Rev. Richard Thomas, the communications officer for the diocese of Oxford. It is interesting that the Church now has communications officers as well. Perhaps he is on e-mail. He pointed out that Oxford was one of the first

*[Ms Kate Hoey]*

dioceses to call for an independent inquiry following the report on the commissioners' losses in the *Financial Times*, which is very welcome. He went on, however, to criticise part of the Select Committee report. He said that, since the diocese of Oxford finds 92.4 per cent. of its costs from its own resources, it rejects the view expressed in the Select Committee report that the parochial system is under threat in his diocese.

That sounds a little smug. The book "The Historic Resources of the Church of England" shows on a beautifully coloured map those areas of the country which pay more and have high income and high potential. It just happens that Oxford is in the area of highest income and highest potential, yet the inner-city areas to which I have referred are a very different colour; they have low income and low potential. It is not good enough for one diocese, which is especially well off, simply to ignore what happens in areas such as the inner city that I represent.

**Mr. Frank Field:** If some dioceses are doing so well, does my hon. Friend hope, as I do, that the commissioners would expect such dioceses to cover the whole of their future pension commitments much more quickly than the poorer dioceses which she and I represent?

**Ms Hoey:** I hope that that will be taken into account. It would not be possible for areas such as the one that I represent to meet their pension commitments in the same length of time as it would take the richer dioceses.

I hope that the right hon. Member for Selby will take seriously not only the views of the Select Committee, but those which have been expressed tonight. It is clear that the majority of hon. Members present feel that there needs to be further debate and more accountability. If the Church is to win back confidence after this debacle, it is important that the recommendations of the Select Committee report are considered.

Indeed, I hope that the Church returns to looking sincerely at what it said in the report "Faith in the Cities". That report gave people a lot of hope for the future of the Church. It is crucial that that is not lost and that we learn from our mistakes. The Select Committee report has a wide remit. Indeed, it would be a real eye-opener to the average member of a congregation, and it is very important that we learn its lessons.

8.6 pm

**Mr. Bernard Jenkin** (Colchester, North): I rise rather at the fag end of the debate; nevertheless, I hope that my speech will be worth while. I declare my interest as an adviser to Legal and General Group plc. It is of tangential interest to this debate, but I declare it as a formality, as it is a major provider of pensions.

The hon. Member for Vauxhall (Ms Hoey) referred to a letter that she had received from the Oxford diocese. I recently received a letter from my own diocese of Chelmsford, which was similar in tone. It described the report of the Select Committee on Social Security as

"not news to those with responsibility for ministry in the Church of England",

and it explained how the consequences of the Church's decision were all in hand and that everything would be all right. There is no reference in that letter, for example, to the possible necessity of providing additional contributions to pension funds. I do not think that the full impact of what has happened has been absorbed and I thoroughly endorse the comments of the hon. Lady.

This debate has been very much characterised by one tribute after another to the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field). One is reminded of the second line of the hymn, if it is not idolatrous to quote from it, that says:

"To his feet thy tribute bring".

I share those sentiments. Being involved with the report as a Member of the Committee was an interesting exercise and very worth while.

I want to cover three points, one of which has already been discussed quite extensively—avoiding complacency. Behind the tabloid headlines, of which one can understand Church Commissioners becoming a little tired, there is a genuinely horrific story. Perhaps we have understated some of it and, on re-reading the report, I wonder whether we have. I should like to put those features on the record, talk briefly about the apportionment of blame and, finally, about the role of Parliament.

I intervened on my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) about the problem of the property portfolio in the context of what he referred to as the "loss" of the Church Commissioners. He quietly admonished the Committee for putting the word "loss" in inverted commas in paragraph 17. We often hear that £800 million has not really been lost. It is worth studying that paragraph and the pension funds with which the Church Commissioners' fund has been compared. Between 1989 and 1992, the Church Commissioners' funds peaked at £3 billion, but at the end of that period stood at just over £2.1 million. That loss is the source of the £800 million figure.

During that period, however, comparable pension funds increased by between 10 and 15 per cent. One could argue that the loss is far greater than £800 million, especially in terms of the on-going loss of income to the Church of England as a result of that lost money. Once losses have been sustained, one cannot get the money back. One starts with the number of talents in one's hand, that is the lesson. That income has been irrevocably lost to the Church, with the consequences that flow from it.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) said that the secrecy surrounding the loss might be acceptable in a private business, but not in a business handling public funds. He has got it wrong, because a publicly quoted company, or indeed, any company is required to file a consolidated report and accounts at Companies House on a regular basis. That was not done by the Church Commissioners; moreover, even the information that was provided was thoroughly misleading and did not reveal the proper state of the Ashford project.

**Mr. Clifton-Brown:** On the financial management, does my hon. Friend agree that as the capital value of the fund decreased, it was inevitable that the income decreased? The commissioners moved to make up the shortfall by buying high-interest coupons, therefore exacerbating the future capital growth of the capital fund.

**Mr. Jenkin:** There is a great deal in what my hon. Friend says.

By any standards, the Metro centre would be a prime asset in any property portfolio. No one would dispute that. When the Select Committee took evidence, it was pointed out that the approved budget for the project was originally £130 million. Coopers and Lybrand gave the final cost at

£272 million, yet we were constantly rained upon with words to the effect that it was an extremely successful investment. The Chairman of the Select Committee finally pointed out:

"You keep maintaining this is the most brilliant development, and I am now beginning to appreciate Sir John's skills."

Sir John was the original partner, who managed to sell his half of the development to the Church of England at the absolute top of the market. The Committee thought that, somehow, he had managed to dump the project on the Church of England, but, no, the Church had bought it voluntarily.

I used to work for 3i, which is based in the constituency of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey, and I was trained in the arts and technicalities of venture capital. We would not touch property projects, because that is a specialised market, and the development of retail property is an even more specialised market. The Church of England found itself in those specialised markets and went into partnership with the real sharp-toothed experts. It is no surprise that when deals were offered, the Church, given its inexpert experience and inexpert advice, offered a higher price for them than any other group. That is why the Church Commissioners were dumped with the Metro centre.

The commissioners have not denied that the returns to the Church of England's investors on the Metro centre was negative, but we were constantly told that it had been a fantastically successful investment. That demonstrates the scale of the amateurism with which such projects were approached by the Church Commissioners.

Special measures were taken to increase the income of the Church Commissioners. Capital was spent and capitalised in their accounts, but was then taken as revenue through subsidiary companies and distributed to the Church of England. Sir Michael Colman specifically said that that practice would be illegal in any ordinary company. That again demonstrates the lack of judgment that was used in making such decisions.

Should we allocate blame? I do not think that we should allocate it to specific individuals, because the commissioners arrived at the beginning of the 1980s without having engaged in any serious reform of their procedures for perhaps 100 years. Some minor reforms had been introduced, but their culture of behaviour was deeply rooted in the past. The way in which they arrived at decisions had not caught up with modern practice.

As I said earlier in an intervention, the decision to increase the pensions simply emerged. It is impossible to find anyone who took responsibility, because no one was responsible. The structure does not identify individuals who are responsible. That explains to a great extent why the bishops have been so apologetic. His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Chelmsford have acted swiftly to ensure an adequate response to the crisis, but they have quite rightly not sought to find scapegoats because they feel that everyone is responsible. This House is also responsible because, ultimately, the affairs in question have been conducted through an institution that is responsible to the House and Parliament. We share in that responsibility. I say that even though I have only recently been elected to the House.

That brings me to my final point about the role of Parliament. We could continue to leave the Church Commissioners to sort out their own problems. We could spend about one sixth of the time spent on today's debate nodding things through when they present us with a Measure. That would be profoundly wrong.

**Mr. Michael:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Jenkin:** I am glad that the hon. Gentleman, the Opposition spokesman, agrees. I asked him earlier, in all sincerity, whether he would be willing to make a commitment on behalf of his party that time would be found for debates of this nature. I was a little disappointed when he failed to offer that commitment.

**Mr. Michael:** Since the hon. Gentleman has provoked me, let me respond in a friendly way. If he asked the same question of the Leader of the House about next week's business, he would not get a clear assurance. It is not for a Front-Bench spokesman to commit either the Government or the Opposition to find time for such a debate; that matter is dealt with through the usual channels. My reply, which was constructive, was that I am sure that the Opposition would be willing to respond constructively to the comments of the right hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) about reaching the right balance to ensure not only the swift passage of a Measure but time for debate and amendment.

**Mr. Jenkin:** I believe that we all share that worry. I expect that the anxiety of my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby is that, being a private Bill, unable to take a guillotine, it would be subject to all the delays, as the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) said, like the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill. It might take years to pass through the House, and obviously we want a swifter process than that if possible. However, we must have a measure that we can properly scrutinise and amend. That requires the Government, of whatever party, to provide time and to ensure that there is a Bill that we can amend.

I sent a summary of the conclusions of the Select Committee's report to every one of the serving clergy in my constituency. Some of them wrote back and asked for a full copy of the report. Many of them wrote back with their comments. That has opened the door on the scale of the problem, of which I do not think many of them had previously been aware.

I quote one letter—in fact, from the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, South and Maldon (Mr. Whittingdale). The writer actually says:

"I thoroughly approve of your plans, particularly legislation through proposing a Bill."

The House must respond to the many churchgoers and clergy in our constituencies, and shoulder its responsibilities, otherwise we simply go down the track advertised by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey. People will ask, "Why have an established Church at all? Why are the Prime Minister and other Ministers Church Commissioners if we simply put through Measures on the nod?"

I shall perhaps embarrass my hon. Friend the Minister. No doubt the Measure would be nodded through with an element of approval from the Government. The payroll vote might even be whipped to ensure a speedy process. That is not the way that the matter should be dealt with, and I very much hope that Front Benchers on both sides of the House will consider it important enough for the House to consider it properly.

8.21 pm

**Mr. Frank Field:** With permission of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I conclude by thanking hon. Members who have given up a Thursday evening when they need not have been here. It shows again the interest that the House takes in these matters.

I wish also to emphasise the three aspects that emerged most strongly for me from the debate. I hope that the Government will seriously consider the policy implications of the behaviour of one exempt charity. No one has asked for the whole elaborate structure to be brought down, but we all believed, when we passed the Charities Act 1985, that exempted charities were working rather well. My experience, having been in the House for 16 years, is that, whenever the House agrees on a measure and nods it through, whether it is the Charities Act or the Child Support Act 1991, one can almost guarantee that there will be trouble shortly afterwards. One of the reasons for having a ding-dong in this place is to try to probe matters carefully.

The other two issues are directed at the Second Church Estates Commissioner. I am sure that everyone will be pleased with the statement that he made today about the inquiry that the Church will undertake into the developments in Kent. None of us wants the Church to spend more money than necessary in considering those issues; enough has already been spent. We are not in the business of giving additional fees to solicitors, to other lawyers, or to specialists in that subject.

I hope that the most important message that the Second Church Estates Commissioner will take away is the feeling on both sides of the House about the way in which future legislation—in that respect only—should be approached. None of us wants to overturn the 1919 enabling Measure. Those of us who have spoken cannot, as a group, be classified as fanatics who have some hidden or other agenda that they wish to inflict on the Church.

It is obvious, from our debate, that there is genuine anxiety about the way in which one of the great institutions of the country will approach the next stage of its existence. When two Bills, or two Measures, do come to the House on the pension front and on restructuring the Church Commissioners, we should like to help the Church, in a humble manner, to get those measures as right as humans can get them right—not to put our sticky fingers into affairs that are not our affairs but merely to emphasise, as so many people have emphasised, that that is not just an ecclesiastical matter.

The Church of England is an institution that belongs to the nation and is, in some ways, inseparable from it, and the Church cannot maintain that position and claim a sect-like status when it comes to legislation.

**Dr. Liam Fox** (Woodspring): I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

*Motion, by leave, withdrawn.*

## Bingo

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Burns.]*

8.24 pm

**Mr. John Whittingdale** (Colchester, South and Maldon): I am grateful to have the opportunity to mention a matter that affects millions of people throughout the country.

I admit that a year ago I would not have guessed that I would be speaking in a debate about bingo, let alone initiating one. My interest in that subject arose only after I was invited, earlier this year, to visit the Gala bingo club in Colchester. The club is in fact in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin), whom I am pleased to see in his place tonight.

I had never been to a bingo club before, but I thought that it would be slightly fading and a bit dingy and that it might be attended by perhaps 50 of my more elderly female constituents. It had also been suggested to me that I might enjoy calling a game, so I had been practising beforehand with such phrases as "66—clickety-click" and, indulging in a fit of nostalgia, "Maggie's den—No. 10".

My first surprise was that bingo clubs of the 1990s have changed a great deal since the smoke-filled halls that were associated with the industry in the 1960s. The Gala club in Colchester is modern, spacious and comfortable, and in addition to bingo it offers a range of other entertainment, such as cabaret acts, a restaurant and bars. It is typical of the new breed of bingo clubs, costing as much as £4 million each, which employ more than 35,000 people throughout the country.

My second surprise of the night was the number of people who were present. Instead of 50, I found close on 1,000 people in that club, both male and female, of all different ages and of many different social backgrounds. A bingo club now is not only a gambling hall; it is a leisure centre where people can meet, talk, enjoy a drink, have a meal and generally have a fun and sociable afternoon or evening of activity.

In addition, clubs often fulfil a more general social role as places where elderly people can go during the day to enjoy a cheap meal, have a bit of fun and chat with friends in a warm, safe environment. It is for those reasons, perhaps, that more than 3 million people regularly play bingo in this country.

The stakes are comparatively small; they often work out at less than 30p a go, and as much as 90 per cent. of that sum can be returned in the form of prizes. It is gambling in its softest form. Unlike casinos, horse racing and the dogs, one cannot lose one's life savings, however hard one tries, by playing bingo, the main reason being that it is literally impossible to chase losses. On a really bad night, if one played every game with the maximum number of cards and one did not win a penny, one might be down by about £30 at the end of the evening. Participation in the game is also limited by the physical limits on how many cards can be played at one time.

On Tuesday night, I took advantage of the generosity of the Government Whips Office to visit the Gala club in Clapham, of which I am now a member.

It was my first attempt at playing the game, and I was told that seasoned players of bingo usually play with six cards in a single game. I soon discovered that I was unable

to keep up with the numbers being called, and I found myself trying to remember more and more numbers as I fell further and further behind. Happily, I was next to a lady who was managed to mark her own card and keep an eye on mine at the same time, and to tell me when I had missed a number.

I must pay tribute to the mental agility and skill of experienced players of bingo. I do not believe that Einstein could play more than perhaps two sets of six cards at a time, even if he were permitted to do so by the present law.

Despite those safeguards and the physical limitations, the bingo industry is governed by draconian rules and regulations ostensibly to protect the consumer. The Gaming Act 1968 introduced strict controls on hard gambling and was designed to prevent organised crime and the Mafia gaining control of casinos. However, by some curious accident of history, the Act was passed by Parliament in a form that restricted the bingo industry within the same framework. As a result, the bingo industry, which was described by the Royal Commission on gambling as

"a pastime where people, mostly women and often the lonely or the elderly, can meet in a neighbourly way to enjoy an agreeable flutter"

through the introduction of the 1968 Act, became a threat to the nation's moral and financial well-being which had to be contained within stringent and bureaucratic controls.

Having studied the restrictions, I am amazed that we still have a bingo industry in the United Kingdom. I shall give a few examples of the rules. If one decides that one would like to participate in a game of bingo—a decision which, under the terms of the 1968 Act, must be entirely unstimulated—one's first port of call may be the local or national newspapers. A bingo club can advertise in a local paper—but not a national one—and it can say that people may play bingo at that club. The advertisement can say how much it will cost to play bingo and the times at which people can play. However, the Gaming Act specifically prohibits any advertisement from telling people what they may win at the bingo club—a far cry from the national lottery.

If, as with a national game, an advertisement is placed in a national paper which says how much people can win, the Gaming Act states that the advertisement must not contain any information about where people can play the game. The Government's recent action to raise the limit on the maximum prize in the national game from £75,000 to £250,000 is extremely welcome. However, my hon. Friend the Minister will understand that its effect is blunted somewhat if the clubs cannot tell anyone where that prize may be won.

Perhaps the most ludicrous example of the restrictions on advertising that I have encountered so far involved a ruling that the Gaming Board told me about, whereby a club circulated information to its members telling them about prizes that were available in the club. That is permissible if the information is restricted only to the members of the club and it is not circulated more widely to non-members.

However, the club made the mistake of sending out the circular in a transparent wrapping. As a result, the name and location of the club and the amount of money that could be won there was visible through the wrapping. The Gaming Board ruled that that was a clear breach of the rules and that the circular should be withdrawn because there was a real danger that the postman might be corrupted by reading it.

The strong competition for the population's limited amount of disposable income is ever increasing. The national lottery has had a severe impact. I support the national lottery, but we must recognise that it is having an effect on other forms of gambling. Attendance figures at bingo clubs on Saturday nights, especially during the rollover week, are noticeably lower. The pools and premium bond companies—both of which, like the national lottery but not bingo, are open to 16-year-olds—also compete for people's leisure time and money. However, the national lottery, the pools and premium bonds—the chief competitors of the bingo industry—have been permitted to break away from the policy of satisfying unstimulated demand.

During the passage of the legislation which provided for the national lottery, it was recognised that its success would depend upon access to advertising. That has, in turn, led to the lifting of the pools advertising ban—a move that I support strongly. However, it is indefensible that bingo—the last remaining form of soft gambling that is governed by the restrictions—should not be able to benefit also from free access to advertising in all the available media.

Should one overcome the advertising problems and manage to find a suitable bingo club—perhaps on the recommendation of one's friends or by simply stumbling across it on the street—one will encounter a second problem. When I first visited the Colchester Gala club, I expressed a wish to play a game. I was told that it was illegal for me to do so; it was quite all right for me to call out the numbers from the stage, but I would need to become a member if I wanted to play. That did not seem an insuperable obstacle; I said that I would be happy to become a member—particularly when I was told that it was free. However, I was then informed that, by law, my membership could not be granted for at least 24 hours. Apparently that is a cooling-off period during which people have time to reconsider their momentous decision to play a game of bingo.

That restriction has a severe impact in tourist resorts, as many people who visit bingo clubs may be staying in the area for only one or two days. As a result, large numbers of potential customers may be turned away. Some of the larger bingo clubs are able to reduce the impact of the rule, at least partially, by running a system whereby membership of one club within the group entitles a member to play at any of the other clubs within that group. However, that is a benefit which the smaller operator is unable to offer.

I find it difficult to understand why that period of reflection was thought necessary in 1968; in 1995 there can be no justification for it. With the exception of casinos, any member of the public has open access—subject to an age requirement—to all other forms of gaming, most of which have unlimited stakes. I invite the House to consider the impact on national lottery ticket sales if one had to give 24 hours notice of the intention to play.

Even if one manages to overcome all of the obstacles which Parliament has put in the way of people who wish to play bingo, one will still not be free of Government interference and regulation. Having found a bingo club, become a member and waited the all-important 24 hours

*[Mr. John Whittingdale]*

to reflect upon the morality of one's intentions, under the Gaming Act a person may still spend only £6.80 in any one session, including the entry fee. By law, the club must ensure that it does not take more than that permitted maximum from any one player.

Despite the fact that, in every other form of gaming in the United Kingdom, players can determine how much they wish to invest, if one is playing bingo the decision is not the individual's but that of the Gaming Board and of the Home Office. The clubs are even limited as to the amount to which they can boost the jackpot over and above the stake which the players have invested.

At any time those regulations would be regarded by all sensible people as archaic, unnecessary and anachronistic. With the advent of the national lottery, they pose a real danger to the survival of the bingo industry. I bring these matters to the attention of the House tonight in the interests of competition and justice. I have no interest to declare in the bingo industry, other than wishing to see an industry that now has to compete with the national lottery and the enhanced advertising capabilities of the pools given a fair chance.

The time for lengthy consultation has passed. The industry is falling into decline, which can be halted only by deregulation that will allow it to compete on a basis equal to that of its main competitors while it is still in good enough shape to take advantage of a level playing field. The Government have rightly championed competition and deregulation. No industry is more deserving of the chance to enjoy the benefits of those policies than the bingo industry. I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to give it that chance tonight by announcing his intention to deregulate the bingo industry.

8.38 pm

**Sir Mark Lennox-Boyd** (Morecambe and Lunesdale): I rise to speak briefly in support of my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, South and Maldon (Mr. Whittingdale), who is to be commended for drawing a problem to the attention of the House and for clearly explaining in detail and with care the restrictions placed on a successful and so far profitable industry, which provides a public service to many people in different communities.

I imagine that all seaside towns have some form of bingo facility and that Plymouth is no exception, although I do not know of any bingo clubs there. I speak on behalf of the Gala bingo club in my constituency, which is an admirable organisation. I have visited it several times—most recently last year, when I was deeply impressed by the range and extent of its facilities. That bingo club comprises a large hall with capacity for up to 1,000 people. It is extremely well furnished, well lit and well decorated in the modern idiom. It has a pleasant bar and good food and dining refreshment facilities, and a dance floor. It offers all that one would expect for an evening's entertainment, including a cabaret and dancing.

That establishment is not a gambling den or primarily for gambling. It is primarily for social activities which include a flutter, as my hon. Friend so aptly put it. From information supplied by Bass, which owns the Gala chain, I understand that 65 per cent. of all bingo players, who number 3 million, play for pleasure rather to gamble. How Bass defines that might be examined, but it makes the legitimate point that bingo is a social and not a gambling activity.

The Government last legislated to change the bingo industry regime in 1992, with the Bingo Bill. That introduced measures of a liberalising kind, to remove some of the regulatory burden on the industry, but by no means enough. As my hon. Friend said, much of that burden remains on the industry's shoulders. Remarkably, that modest lifting of the oppressive regime was considered sufficient when, only two years later, we were all talking about a national lottery—which we have now, with a vengeance. That shows how quickly social attitudes towards the morality of gambling change. As my hon. Friend said, it is absurd that bingo was left behind and not put on an equal footing with the industries with which it competes.

My hon. Friend used nearly every argument, but he omitted to mention that—as I was reliably informed—the odds in bingo of winning a modest prize are infinitely higher than the odds of winning a modest prize, let alone a jackpot prize, in the national lottery. I advocate bingo as a much more sensible form of flutter than the national lottery.

Bingo clubs are utterly respectable places of entertainment where one may find a coach party of middle-aged or elderly people, sometimes single lonely people and sometimes married couples who are there for social activity and human contact. Bingo provides a worthwhile social benefit as well as being a profitable industry for the 35,000 people whom it employs.

It is extraordinary that the Gala bingo club in my constituency cannot advertise saying, "Come to Gala on Saturday night for a dance, dinner and an evening out with a little bingo." But using the so-called inducement of an evening out, dancing, a cabaret and a meal to persuade the public to indulge in gambling is unlawful. That form of puritanism is absurd and bizarre in the current mores of our country. As my hon. Friend rightly said, it was probably absurd and bizarre even before the national lottery, but that has now exposed the folly of maintaining such restrictions.

I invite my hon. Friend the Minister and his Home Office colleagues urgently to examine that area of the law and to make changes as rapidly as possible. The national lottery, premium bonds, pools organisations and bingo should enjoy the same unrestricted ability to advertise. If I were in my hon. Friend's position, I would consider the bingo industry as part of the entertainment industry. It should be judged in that light: the gambling element—which of course is present—is incidental to bingo's major element of providing entertainment, and a legitimate and safe leisure activity for millions of people.

8.46 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Nicholas Baker):** I welcome the initiative of my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, South and Maldon (Mr. Whittingdale) in introducing this timely debate. His personal interest in deregulation is well known and he and my hon. Friend the Member for Morecambe and Lunesdale (Sir M. Lennox-Boyd) undertook personal researches that qualified them to speak authoritatively in the way that they did.

Commercial bingo, as played in bingo clubs throughout Britain, is a popular form of entertainment. There are more than 900 licensed bingo clubs in England, Wales and Scotland, and figures from the bingo industry suggest that every day, on average, about 500,000 people go to bingo clubs. Those players staked a total of £811 million in the year to August 1994. The industry's turnover is growing, and the money staked has increased by 31 per cent. since 1990.

Before the 1960s, commercial bingo—which used to be known as housey-housey in the Army and as lotto in homes throughout the country—and other forms of gaming were prohibited in law. The Betting and Gaming Act 1960 permitted gaming to be carried on as an activity of a club, and in so doing inadvertently allowed the introduction of commercial gaming. Large numbers of clubs sprang up offering bingo and casino gaming on a commercial basis. The new law was unclear and proved difficult to enforce; there was evidence that gamblers were being exploited, and there was criminal involvement in gaming.

The Gaming Act 1968 introduced the present system for the control and supervision of gaming. That legislation established the Gaming Board, which has wide powers to supervise commercial gaming and a general responsibility to keep the extent, character and location of gaming facilities under review. The 1968 Act applies a similar, although less rigorous, package of controls to bingo as to casino gaming. That regulatory system has been successful in ensuring that the bingo industry is stable and well run. The industry is generally free from criminal involvement and exploitation. Abuses are rare.

The system is also self-financing. The costs of regulation are offset by fees that the industry must pay for certificates from the Gaming Board and licences from the licensing justices.

That success, however, should not engender complacency. As my hon. Friends pointed out, the basic legislation governing bingo is now more than 25 years old. We must continue to ensure that the present controls are necessary, up to date and as effective as possible.

Hon. Members will be aware that we have been reviewing a number of restrictions on gambling as part of the Government's deregulation initiative. Some changes have already been made or are in hand. They include changes to the law on betting shops, lotteries, football pools and gaming machines. Bingo is not exempt from the review process. We have already made a number of changes to the law on bingo, and we have set out our plans for others. I should like briefly to outline some of them.

In 1992, we partially relaxed the ban on advertising bingo to allow some print advertising. Previously, the Gaming Act 1968 provided a general prohibition on the advertisement of any gaming premises or facilities. Earlier this year, we increased the maximum prize in the national bingo game from £75,000 to £250,000. The national game was introduced by the Gaming (Bingo) Act 1985 which the Government supported. It allows bingo clubs in Britain to join together to play multiple bingo.

In March this year, we published a consultation paper on gaming machines which has important implications for bingo clubs. At present, bingo clubs may offer either a number of £6 amusement-with-prizes machines, which pay out a maximum of £3 in cash or £6 in tokens, or two £200 jackpot machines. Under our proposals, bingo clubs would be allowed to offer a £10 all-cash amusement-with-prizes machine or up to four £200 jackpot machines.

We take the general view that traditional commercial bingo is towards the soft end of the gambling spectrum. It is a controlled form of gaming conducted in a social environment, and it was described aptly by my hon. Friend. Players' takes are low, the pace of proceedings is fairly contained and there are limited opportunities for participants to reinvest their winnings or chase their losses. The amount of money that operators may retain is strictly controlled. We believe that commercial bingo, as it is currently played, carries a low social risk. That is not to imply, however, that controls are unnecessary.

Like other forms of gambling, bingo is a cash-generating business. As such, it is particularly vulnerable to abuse by operators. Without effective regulation, there would be opportunities for unscrupulous operators to cream off money from participants which should be returned in winnings. We believe, therefore, that there will continue to be a need for controls to keep bingo free from criminal involvement and to protect participants from exploitation.

We are currently considering other aspects of the controls on bingo. They include the remaining restrictions on the advertising of bingo to which my hon. Friend referred. The partial relaxation of the ban on advertising bingo in 1992 did not allow the advertising of prize money or inducements to be linked to particular premises. There is a question of whether the remaining restrictions are necessary for the protection of the public. We hope to consult fairly soon on that and on broadcast advertising.

Another issue is the requirement that bingo halls must be run as clubs, with a 24-hour waiting period before new members are entitled to play. The 24-hour rule and club status are basic features of the system of regulation introduced by the Gaming Act 1968. We are considering whether commercial bingo requires that level of protection.

A further question is the duration of bingo gaming licences. At present, bingo operators must apply for a renewal of their bingo licences every year. We are considering whether such frequent renewal is necessary.

Those are just some of the issues that we are considering on bingo. The comments of my hon. Friends are particularly welcome and timely, and I can assure them that we shall take them most seriously in our considerations. Our thinking on those and other issues will emerge in due course.

I conclude by making it clear that important safeguards for players must be preserved. Nevertheless, there is a case for reviewing some of the present restrictions to ensure that the law does not place unnecessary restrictions on the many people who play bingo or on the industry which provides the facilities that so many people enjoy.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Adjourned accordingly at six minutes to Nine o'clock.*

# Written Answers to Questions

*Monday 1 May 1995*

## HEALTH

### Tacrine

**Mrs. Beckett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will indicate her reasons for not licensing the drug Tacrine for the treatment of Alzheimer's disease; and if she will list the countries in Europe where it is licensed. [19901]

**Mr. Murphy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made towards the processing of Cognex (Tacrine) by the United Kingdom. [20319]

**Mr. Sackville:** The Committee on Safety of Medicines (CSM), has provisionally concluded that, on grounds relating to safety and efficacy, they are unable to advise the licensing authority that Tacrine should be licensed at this stage. Under the United Kingdom licensing procedures, applicants for drug licences have extensive rights of appeal against the provisional conclusions of the CSM. The company promoting Tacrine is exercising these rights and the CSM will consider its appeal at the hearing.

The European Union's Committee for Proprietary Medicinal Products has also concluded that Tacrine has not met the requirements for licensing under article 5 of directive 65/65/EEC. The majority of the European Union member states have decided to abide by this decision.

Tacrine is licensed in France and Sweden.

### NHS Chairman

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total sum paid to chairmen of *(a)* NHS authorities and *(b)* NHS trusts as salaries and emoluments in each year since 1985. [20676]

**Mr. Malone:** The available information is shown in the tables.

*Remuneration paid to NHS authorities chairmen (£000)*

| *1988–89* | *1989–90* | *1990–91* |
|---|---|---|
| 3,183 | 3,281 | 5,878 |

*Emoluments paid to NHS authorities chairmen (£000)*

| *1992–93* | *1993–94* |
|---|---|
| 4,851 | 4,204 |

*Source:*
Annual accounts of regional, district and the London postgraduate teaching hospitals (SHAs) and family practitioner committees and family health services authorities.

*Notes:*
1. Figures for 1993–94 are provisional.
2. Figures are NOT comparable between the tables. Before 1991–92 the sum included gross salaries and pension contributions only. From 1991–92 it includes gross salaries, monetary value of benefits in kind, expenses allowances (where taxable), compensation for loss of office and chairman's fees.
3. Figures for 1985–86, 1986–87, 1987–88 and 1991–92 could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

*Sums paid to NHS Trust Chairman*

For 1991–92 to 1993–94 this information was published in the annual accounts of each trust, but for 1991–92 and 1992–93 this information was not collected centrally. For 1993–94 I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 16 February at column *808*. From 1994–95 onwards this information will be collected centrally and also published in the annual accounts of each trust.

### Medical (Professional Performance) Bill

**Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the basis of her calculations that the initial annual cost of retraining doctors consequent to her proposed Medical Act will be £530,000; and on what number of doctors, whose performance is likely to be judged seriously deficient it is based. [21062]

**Mr. Malone:** The explanatory and financial memorandum of the Medical (Professional Performance) Bill states that any increase in the General Medical Council retention fee—to cover the cost to the GMC of the new performance procedures—and the costs of remedial training undertaken by doctors to improve their standard of professional performance are expected to increase national health service expenditure by up to £530,000 a year. Of this, the estimated retraining costs are £280,000. The GMC estimates that 100 to 150 doctors a year might be subject to assessment under the new procedures, of whom 50 to 75 might be subject to remedial training or sanction.

The costs of retraining would vary widely, according to individual need, and would not necessarily be borne by the NHS. The figure of £280,000 was a central estimate after considering a range of possible scenarios; it is very small in proportion to the funds already available to hospital doctors and general practitioners who maintain their professional standards through continuing education.

### Dental Services

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average waiting time for a person to become accepted as a patient of an NHS dentist in each health district in England. [21228]

**Mr. Malone:** Information about waiting times for patients to be accepted by dentists in the general dental service is not available centrally. Any unregistered patient who needs urgent treatment should seek the help of their family health services authority.

### Hospitality

**Mrs. Beckett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the Department of Health's hospitality budget in each of the last five years. [21748]

**Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much was spent on official hospitality by her Department in 1994–95. [21207]

**Mr. Sackville:** Expenditure on hospitality during 1994–95, including basic refreshments for meetings of expert advisory groups and working groups and for meetings with representatives of other Government

Departments, voluntary organisations and public bodies is shown in the table. For details of previous years' expenditure I refer the right hon. Member and the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member of Truro (Mr. Taylor) on 1 November 1994 at columns *1073-74*.

| | *1994–95* £ |
|---|---|
| (a) Department | 229,779 |
| (b) Agencies | 32,451 |
| Total | 262,230 |

### Departmental Management

**Mrs. Beckett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what are the departmental administration costs in each year since and including 1989–90; what is the planned expenditure on departmental administration increase in 1995–96 and 1996–97; and if she will make a statement on the planned increase in spending in 1996–97 over 1995–96; [21751]

(2) if she will make a statement on the planned change in Department of Health staff in 1996–97. [21742]

**Mr. Sackville:** Departmental administration costs from 1989–90 to 1994–95, and the planned expenditure for 1995–96 and 1996–97 are shown in the table. The figures for 1994–95 are an estimate. In the three years to 31 March 1997, the staff costs and numbers of the Department as it stood on 1 April 1994 are planned to decrease by 21 per cent. Separately, in 1996–97, staff numbers will increase as a result of the replacement, subject to legislation, of regional health authorities with regional offices of the National Health Service Executive, in respect of which there will be a transfer of £63 million from hospital, community health and related services current expenditure to departmental administration.

| *Year* | *Costs (£000s)* |
|---|---|
| 1989–90 | 174,681 |
| 1990–91 | 216,785 |
| 1991–92 | 240,267 |
| 1992–93 | 276,280 |
| 1993–94 | 250,775 |
| 1994–95 | 260,264 |
| 1995–96 | 238,145 |
| 1996–97 | 291,222 |

### Doctors

**Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate she has made of the proportion of doctors in the United Kingdom who speak *(a)* Urdu and *(b)* Punjabi; and if she will make a statement. [20923]

**Mr. Malone:** No such estimate has been made as this information is not available centrally.

### Nurses

**Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate she has made of the proportion of nurses working in the United Kingdom who speak *(a)* Urdu and *(b)* Punjabi; and if she will make a statement. [20924]

**Mr. Sackville:** No such estimate has been made as this information is not available centrally.

### Conflicts of Interest

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health on how many occasions during the last five years *(a)* civil servants and *(b)* special advisers in her Department or its agencies have declared conflicts of interest; and how many instructions have been issued about their retention, disposal or management. [21386]

**Mr. Sackville:** For the Department and agencies of which we are responsible any conflict of interest involving a civil servant would have been dealt with in accordance with the established guidance. Records of the number of cases are not held centrally. In the last five years, no special advisers have declared a conflict of interest.

### NHS Authorities

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish an up-to-date list by region of all the chairs and non-executive members of each health authority, indicating the gender and occupation of each individual. [21358]

**Mr. Malone:** The appointment of non-executive members to district health authorities and family health services authorities is a matter for the regional health authority. Information on chairmen and non-executive members of regional health authorities and chairmen of district health authorities and family health services authorities will be placed in the Library.

### Long-term Care

**Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action her Department is taking to ensure that health authorities abide by the requirements of HSG(95)8, NHS responsibilities for long-term care. [21273]

**Mr. Bowis:** As part of the implementation of HSG(95)8 all health authorities are required to draw up and publish local policies and eligibility criteria. The National Health Service Executive will monitor these closely to ensure that they meet the national framework of requirements set out in HSG(95)8.

### NHS Provider Units

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the total annual cost improvement programme in the national health service provider units in each of the last four years. [21330]

**Mr. Sackville:** This information is not available centrally.

### Private Patients

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much income has been received from treating private patients in each national health service hospital in the last year *(a)* as a cost figure and *(b)* as a proportion of that hospital's income. [21334]

**Mr. Sackville:** Details of the private income of national health service trusts for 1993–94 and the percentage of total income that private patient income represents will be placed in the Library.

### Consultancy

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will estimate the cost of employing consultants in connection with market-testing programmes in which her Department has been engaged since their inception. [21369]

**Mr. Sackville:** Since publication of the White Paper, "Competing for Quality", in November 1991, until 31 March 1995, the latest date for which figures are held, the total cost of consultants employed in connection with the market testing programmes of the Department and its agencies is £1,488,000.

### Continuing Care

**Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Secretary for Health what action she proposes to take to ensure that New River health authority complies with the requirements of HSG(95)8 in relation to its decision to reduce its 1995–96 continuing care contract with Hornsey Central hospital in respect of the number of occupied bed days. [21272]

**Mr. Bowis:** HSG(95)8 states that until policies and eligibility criteria for continuing care have been agreed health authorities should not proceed with any plans to reduce continuing care services unless those plans are covered by existing agreements with local authorities. New River health authority has reduced its contract for continuing care beds at Hornsey Central hospital in line with bed usage in 1994–95. They are discussing with the local social services department how the savings can be re-invested in other continuing care services. I have asked the chairman of New River health authority to let me have details of their reinvestment plans once they have been agreed with the local authority.

### Appointments

**Mr. Ainger:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many civil service appointments were made to administrative assistant and administrative officer posts in her Department and the agencies for which she is accountable in each quarter from September 1993 until April 1995. [21767]

**Mr. Sackville:** The following civil service appointments were made to administrative assistant and administrative officer posts in my Department and its agencies.

| *Quarter* | *Administrative Officer* | *Administrative Assistant* |
|---|---|---|
| September–December 1993 | 2 | 1 |
| January–March 1994 | 2 | — |
| April–June 1994 | — | — |
| July–September 1994 | 1 | 2 |
| October–December 1994 | 2 | — |
| January–March 1995 | 2 | 2 |

All appointments were on fixed term contracts except for 1 AO and 2AAs.

### Mr. Rushton

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what details her Department has received about the severance payment made to Mr. Rushton, the former chief executive of the Avon ambulance trust. [21674]

**Mr. Malone:** None. National health service trusts can authorise severance payments without reference to the Department of Health. They are required to report termination settlements to the NHS Executive quarterly. The payment to Mr. Rushton was made in April 1995 and will be reported in the return for the quarter to 30 June 1995.

### Infertility Treatment

**Mr. Byers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to encourage the extension of infertility treatment on the NHS; and if she will institute an assessment of the effectiveness of the various forms of infertility treatment present funded by the NHS. [21841]

**Mr. Sackville:** Decisions about the resources to be made available for infertility services must be left to individual health authorities as they are in the best position to determine priorities in the light of local needs and circumstances.

An assessment of the effectiveness of infertility treatments is already available in:

> The Effective Health Care Bulletin on "The Management of Subfertility" (August 1992), published for the NHS Management Executive by a consortium of Leeds and York universities and the research unit of the Royal College of Physicians.

Copies of the publication are available in the Library.

### Special Hospitals

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list special hospitals currently operating in shadow trust form which are applying internal market principles; and if she will make a statement. [22041]

**Mr. Bowis:** No.

### Efficiency Ratings

**Mrs. Beckett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the efficiency rating of the English hospital and community service and those of each EEC country in each available year between 1978–79 and 1992–93. [19797]

**Mr. Malone** *[holding answer 21 April 1995]:* Improvements in hospital and community health services efficiency are estimated by comparing the rate of increase in activity with the increase in expenditure. Between 1978–79 and 1992–93, HCHS cost weighted activity in England increased by 39.8 per cent. and HCHC expenditure, adjusted for movements in HCHS pay and prices, by 15.3 per cent. This implies an increase in efficiency of some 21 per cent. over the period. Data on the annual changes in activity and expenditure are in the table. Estimates from these data of efficiency gains for individual years over this period are not regarded as reliable.

Directly comparable data are not available for health services in other European Union countries. However such evidence as is available indicates that unit costs have

generally risen over the last decade. Information on these health services is available in "OECD Health Systems", Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development 1993.

*HCHS cost weighted activity index*

| | *HCHS cost weighted activity index percentage increase over previous year 1978–79 = 100* | | *Expenditure adjusted for changes in input unit cost percentage increase over previous year 1978–79 = 100* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1978–79 | 100.0 | — | 100.0 | — |
| 1979–80 | 100.2 | 0.2 | 100.0 | 0.0 |
| 1980–81 | 105.9 | 5.8 | 100.8 | 0.8 |
| 1981—82 | 107.8 | 1.8 | 103.1 | 2.3 |
| 1982–83 | 107.2 | –0.5 | 103.2 | 0.1 |
| 1983–84 | 113.2 | 5.5 | 104.0 | 0.8 |
| 1984–85 | 116.5 | 3.0 | 104.1 | 0.1 |
| 1985–86 | 119.7 | 2.7 | 104.3 | 0.2 |
| 1986–87 | 121.4 | 1.5 | 104.6 | 0.3 |
| 1987–88 | 123.4 | 1.6 | 105.4 | 0.8 |
| 1988–89 | 124.5 | 0.9 | 106.2 | 0.7 |
| 1989–90 | 127.2 | 2.2 | 108.0 | 1.7 |
| 1990–91 | 128.9 | 1.3 | 109.0 | 1.0 |
| 1991–92 | 135.6 | 5.2 | 111.9 | 2.6 |
| 1992–93 | 139.8 | 3.1 | 115.3 | 3.1 |

*Notes:*

1. The cost weighted activity index provides a broad measure of the overall growth in HCHS activity, in which the contribution of the individual components are weighted by their costs.

2. Estimates of efficiency derived from these figures do not take account of the changing cost of a unit of output over time—for example due to demographic changes in case mix and the costs and benefits of medical advance. It is not possible to measure the effect of the last two components. However, demographic change has meant that the average cost per person treated has increased, particularly because of the growing number of very elderly people, who tend to require more expensive care.

## ATTORNEY GENERAL

### Conflicts of Interest

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Attorney-General on how many occasions during the last five years *(a)* civil servants and *(b)* special advisers in his Department or its agencies have declared conflicts of interests; and how many instructions have been issued about their retention, disposal or management. [21388]

**The Attorney-General:** Comprehensive records are not held centrally for civil servants in the departments and agency for which I am responsible. The requirement to declare conflicts of interest is contained in the "Staff Handbook" of each department and agency. There have been no special advisers in those departments or agency during the last five years.

### Market Testing

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will estimate the cost of employing consultants in connection with market-testing programmes in which his Department has been engaged since their inception. [21371]

**The Attorney-General:** The cost of employing such consultants in the departments for which I am responsible is £104,815.

### Appointments

**Mr. Ainger:** To ask the Attorney-General how many civil service appointments were made to administrative assistant and administrative officer posts in his Department and the agencies for which he is accountable in each quarter from September 1993 until April 1995. [21765]

**The Attorney-General:** The information for the departments for which I am responsible—the legal secretariat to the Law Offices, the Crown Prosecution Service, the Treasury Solicitor's Department, the Serious Fraud Office and the Government Property Lawyers' agency—is given in the table. The figures cover permanent and casual staff but not inter-departmental transfers.

| | *LSLO*[1] | | *CPS* | | *T.SOL.* | | *SFO*[2] | | *GPL* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *AO* | *AA* | *AO* | *AA* | *AO* | *AA* | *AO* | *AA* | *AO* | *AA* |
| 1 October—31 December 1993 | — | — | 43 | 85 | 4 | 0 | 5 | — | 3 | 0 |
| 1 January—31 March 1994 | — | — | 71 | 151 | 6 | 0 | 12 | — | 3 | 0 |
| 1 April—30 June 1994 | — | — | 42 | 123 | 1 | 0 | 4 | — | 3 | 0 |
| 1 July—30 September 1994 | — | — | 38 | 144 | 1 | 1 | 7 | — | 1 | 0 |
| 1 October—31 December 1994 | — | — | 30 | 101 | 3 | 0 | 3 | — | 1 | 0 |
| 1 January—31 March 1995 | — | — | 33 | 80 | 1 | 0 | 2 | — | 1 | 0 |

[1] Administrative grade staff in LSLO are on loan from other departments.

[2] SFO do not employ administrative assistants.

## SCOTLAND

### Executive Agencies

**Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the number and location of Historic Scotland, Registers of Scotland, the Scottish Agricultural Science Agency, the Scottish Fisheries Protection Agency, the Scottish Office Pensions Agency, the Scottish Prisons Service, the Scottish Record Office and the Student Awards Agency for Scotland offices closed and the numbers of jobs lost or transferred as a result of agency work transferring from Scotland to the rest of the United Kingdom over the past five years; and if he will list the number and location of offices opened and jobs gained in Scotland as the result of agency work transferring to Scotland from the rest of the United Kingdom over the same period. [20167]

**Mr. Lang:** I have asked the chief executives of the agencies for which my Department is responsible, to write to the hon. Member.

*Letter from Graeme N. Munro to Mr. Calum Macdonald, dated 1 May 1995:*

The Secretary of State for Scotland has asked me to reply to your recent question about changes in jobs and offices resulting from cross-border transfers of agency work over the past five years.

As you will appreciate Historic Scotland has always been concerned only with the built heritage in Scotland since its establishment as an executive agency in 1991. It maintains no offices or posts outwith Scotland.

The only addition to our functions since 1991 was the transfer of responsibility for marine archaeology in Scotland from the Department of Transport in 1992. This did not involve transfer of posts or offices and the extra responsibility has been absorbed as enhanced productivity by existing staff in Historic Scotland.

I hope this information is helpful to you.

*Letter from Andrew MacLeod to Mr. Calum Macdonald, dated 1 May 1995:*

I have been asked to respond for the Scottish Fisheries Protection Agency to your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Scotland on agency work transferred between Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom.

The Agency has not closed any offices or made any reduction in the number of jobs as a result of transfers of work over the past 5 years. No offices or jobs have been transferred from the rest of the United Kingdom to Scotland in this period.

*Letter from Norman MacLeod to Mr. Calum Macdonald, dated 1 May 1995:*

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your Question about offices closed or opened and jobs lost or gained as a result of transfers of work from or to Scotland, so far as the Scottish Office Pensions Agency is concerned.

All of the Agency's operations are carried out from the above address and no work has transferred from it to other locations in the UK over the past 5 years. Equally, no work has transferred to it from locations elsewhere in the UK.

No offices or jobs have therefore been lost or gained.

*Letter from Alan W. Ramase to Mr. Calum Macdonald, dated 1 May 1995:*

I have been asked to reply, in relation to Registers of Scotland Executive Agency, to your question to the Secretary of State for Scotland about jobs lost/gained and offices closed/opened through transfers of Agency work between Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom.

No Agency work has been transferred to or transferred from the rest of the United Kingdom. The Agency has therefore not gained or lost any jobs nor opened or closed any offices for this reason.

*Letter from Patrick Cadell to Ms. Calum Macdonald, dated 1 May 1995:*

I am writing in response to your question to the Secretary of State for Scotland about the number and location of offices closed and the number of jobs lost or transferred as a result of agency work transferring from Scotland to the rest of the United Kingdom over the past 5 years.

The Scottish Record Office (SRO), which became an executive agency from 1 April 1993, maintains the national archives of Scotland and it would be entirely inappropriate for Scotland's written heritage to be housed anywhere other than Scotland. None of our repositories has been closed nor have any jobs been lost or transferred as a result of any of the SRO's work being transferred outwith Scotland.

Although a few jobs have had to be created as a result of a general increase in workload, none of that increase can be attributed to work being transferred to Scotland from other parts of the United Kingdom.

I hope that this information is of use to you.

*Letter from E. W. Frizzell to Mr. Calum Macdonald, dated 1 May 1995:*

I refer to your Question to the Secretary of State for Scotland about changes in Agencies caused by transfers of work to or from Scotland. I am replying so far as the Scottish Prison Service is concerned.

No offices have been opened or closed or jobs lost or gained in the Scottish Prison Service as a result of transfer of work within the United Kingdom.

*Letter from K. MacRea to Mr. Calum Macdonald, dated 1 May 1995:*

I refer to the Parliamentary Question which you tabled to the Secretary of State for Scotland seeking information on transfers of work between Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom in relation to various Executive Agencies.

I have been asked to reply in respect of the Student Awards Agency for Scotland. There have been no transfers of work, or related changes in staff or offices, since the Agency was established in April 1994.

I trust this is the information you were seeking.

*Letter from Dr. R. K. M. Hay to Mr. Calum Macdonald, dated 1 May 1995:*

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply on behalf of the Scottish Agricultural Science Agency (SASA) to your recent questions regarding the number of jobs lost or transferred as a result of agency work transferring from Scotland to the rest of the United Kingdom over the past five years and the number of jobs gained in Scotland as a result of agency work transferring to Scotland from the rest of the United Kingdom over the same period.

These questions are not applicable to SASA.

### European Regional Development Fund

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 15 December, *Official Report*, column *757*, if he will list those projects in privatised companies which have received European regional development funding since privatisation indicating *(a)* the level of funding and *(b)* the dates when it was received. [20576]

**Mr. Kynoch:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply given today by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade.

### Public Bodies

**Dr. Wright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the executive non-departmental public

bodies sponsored by his Department which are subject *(a)* to investigation by the Parliamentary Commissioner, *(b)* scrutiny by the Audit Commission, *(c)* scrutiny by the National Audit Office, *(d)* statutory provisions for open government, *(e)*performance indicators and *(f)* provisions under the citizens charter. [20663]

**Mr. Lang** *[holding answer 25 April 1995]:* The information requested is as follows: *(a)* Crofters Commission, new town development corporations, Red Deer Commission, Scottish Arts Council, Scottish Homes, Scottish Legal Aid board, Scottish Medical Practices committee, Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Sports Council, Scottish tourist board:

*(b)* None, as the Audit Commission does not operate in Scotland. Its Scottish equivalent is the Accounts Commission for Scotland, which scrutinises the accounts of the seven Scottish river purification boards;

*(c)* this information is listed in the Cabinet Office publication "Public Bodies 1994"; a copy of which is available in the Library of the House;

*(d)* none, although following publication last year of the "Code of Best Practice for Board Members of Public Bodies", the Scottish version of which was published in September 1994 and a copy of which is in the Library of the House, all executive NDPBs have been asked to comply with all reasonable requests for information from Parliament, users of services and individual citizens.

*(e)* Performance indicators are part of the management statement or corporate plan for each NDPB;

*(f)* the citizens charter applies to all public services, including NDPBs. NDPBs serving the public, including those sponsored by my Department, are therefore expected to meet the charter standards.

**Dr Wright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which of the executive non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department have *(a)* a statutory requirement to admit members of the public to all board or committee meetings and *(b)* a statutory requirement to hold open meetings for the public. [20881]

**Mr. Lang** *[holding answer 26 April 1995]:* The information requested is as follows: *(a)* none; *(b)* none.

## Falconry

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many permits have been issued to falconers to take protected species of birds as quarry in each year since 1988; what were the species in respect of which such permits were issued; and what were the number of each species taken. [21247]

**Sir Hector Monro:** Details of licences issued to take protected species in the course of falconry in Scotland for the period 1988–1993 are listed in the table. Figures are not yet available for 1994.

| *Species* | *Number of Licences*[1] | *Birds killed* | *Year* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Alauda arvensis | 2 | 0 | 1988 |
| Corvus frugilegus | | 1 | |
| Gallinula chloropus | | 1 | |
| Lagopus lagopus | | 0 | |
| Larus ridibundus | | 0 | |
| Perdix perdix | | 0 | |
| Phasianus colchicus | | 2 | |
| Turdus merula | | 0 | |
| Anas crecca | 1 | 0 | 1989 |
| Anas platyrhnchos | | 0 | |
| Gallinula chloropus | | 0 | |
| Lagopus lagopus | | 0 | |
| Larus ridibundus | | 0 | |
| Perdix perdix | | 0 | |
| Phasianus colchicus | | 2 | |
| Turdus merula | | 0 | |
| Alauda arvensis | 3 | 3 | 1990 |
| Anthus pratensis | | 27 | |
| Gallinula chloropus | | 0 | |
| Lagopus lagopus | | 0 | |
| Larus ridibundus | | 0 | |
| Perdix perdix | | 0 | |
| Phasianus colchicus | | 0 | |
| Turdus merula | | 1 | |
| Turdus philomelos | | 1 | |
| Alauda arvensis | 2 | 3 | 1991 |
| Anthus pratensis | | 8 | |
| Alauda arvensis | 2 | 10 | 1992 |
| Anthus pratensis | | 10 | |
| Alauda arvensis | 2 | 0 | 1993 |
| Anthus pratensis | | 0 | |
| Turdus merula | | 2 | |
| Turdus philomelos | | 0 | |

[1] Licences covered all or some of the named species.

## Birds of Prey

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many licences have been issued in each year since 1988 to possess birds of prey; and what were the numbers of birds of each species held under such licences. [21251]

**Sir Hector Monro:** None.

## Education Research

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much money has been devoted to funding education research projects by his Department in each of the last five years; and what percentage of education spending this represents. [21558]

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** The expenditure on educational research projects by the Scottish Office education department for the last five years is as set out in the table together with the percentage of overall education expenditure. The education expenditure represents direct funding by central Government which from 1 April 1993 included the funding of all higher education in Scotland, and from the same date the funding of further education colleges. The arts and local authority funding are not included.

| | *Research Expenditure £000's* | *Education Expenditure £000's* | *Percentage* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1990–91 | 1,301 | 364,067 | 0.36 |
| 1991–92 | 1,401 | 473,095 | 0.30 |
| 1992–93 | 1,406 | 570,517 | 0.25 |
| 1993–94 | 1,417 | 1,113.835 | 0.13 |
| 1994–95 | 1,334 | 1,236,635 | 0.11 |

## TRADE AND INDUSTRY

### Post Office

**Mr. Hain:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what account the Governments' review of the Post Office will take of the proposed efficiency audit. [21184]

**Mr. Heseltine:** The Post Office performance review will inform Government thinking on matters of operational effectiveness.

### Road Fuels

**Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his estimate for the price elasticity of demand for road fuels in the United Kingdom in *(a)* 1996, *(b)* 2000 and *(c)* 2005; and if he will make a statement. [20925]

**Mr. Page:** Annex H of Energy Paper No. 65 contains estimates of the price elasticities in the DTI energy model. The long run price elasticity of demand used in the road transport sector is –0.41.

### British Coal Enterprise

**Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) how many individuals were head hunted by British Coal Enterprise for jobs as retraining consultants; how many retraining consultants employed in 1993 had been thus recruited; what proportion of the total number of retraining consultants employed this represents; and if he will make a statement; [20926]

(2) in what capacity Mr. Richard Lewis was employed by British Coal Enterprise during 1993; and if he will make a statement; [20927]

(3) what criteria were used when assessing the suitability of candidates for jobs as retraining consultants with British Coal Enterprise in 1993; and if he will make a statement. [20928]

**Mr. Page:** These are operational matters for British Coal Enterprise.

### European Regional Development Fund

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 7 December, *Official Report*, columns *257-59*, if he will list those projects in privatised companies which have received European regional development funding since privatisation indicating *(a)* the level of funding and *(b)* the dates when it was received. [20579]

**Mr. Page:** The available information for England, Scotland and Wales up to 21 April 1995 has been placed in the Library of the House. Figures for Northern Ireland were included in the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for Northern Ireland on 14 December 1994, *Official Report*, columns *692-94*. All the grants concerned have been approved, for the general economic benefit of the areas concerned, in conformity with criteria on grants to privatised utilities drawn up by the European Commission.

### Civil Servants

**Mr. Ainger:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many civil service appointments were made to administrative assistant and administrative officer posts in his Department and the agencies for which he is accountable in each quarter from September 1993 until April 1995. [21774]

**Mr. Heseltine:** The number of administrative assistants and administrative officers appointed in the Department and its agencies from September 1993 to April 1995 is shown in the tables.

*Headquarters*

| *QA 1993* | | *Q1 1994* | | *Q2 1994* | | *Q3 1994* | | *Q4 1994* | | *Q1 1995* | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *AA* | *AO* | *AA* | *AO* | *AA* | *AO* | *AA* | *AO* | *AA* | *AO* | *AA* | *AO* | *Total* |
| 7 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 18 |

*Agencies*

| | *Q4 1993* | | *Q1 1994* | | *Q2 1994* | | *Q3 1994* | | *Q4 1994* | | *Q1 1995* | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *AA* | *AO* | *AA* | *AO* | *AA* | *AO* | *AA* | *AO* | *AA* | *AO* | *AA* | *AO* | *Total* |
| Accounts Service Agency | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | 0 |
| Companies House | — | — | — | — | — | — | 1 | 1 | 46 | — | — | — | 48 |
| Insolvency Service | — | 2 | 7 | 4 | 1 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | 14 |
| Laboratory of the Government Chemist | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | 0 |
| National Engineering Laboratory | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | 0 |
| National Physical Laboratory | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | 0 |
| National Weights and Measures Laboratory | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | 1 | — | 1 |
| Patent Office | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | 0 |
| Radiocommunications | 3 | — | 1 | — | 1 | — | — | — | 1 | — | 1 | — | 7 |
| Totals | 3 | 2 | 8 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 47 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 70 |

### Hospitality

**Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much was spent on official hospitality by his Department in 1994–95. [21200]

**Mr. Heseltine:** The provisional unaudited outturn figures for 1994–95 are as follows:

| *Area of department* | *£* |
|---|---|
| 1. Centre DTI (excluding net controlled agencies and trading funds) | 508,519 |
| 2. Net controlled agencies and trading funds | |
| Accounts Services Agency | 300 |
| Companies House | 18,289 |
| Laboratory of the Government Chemist | 28,000 |
| National Engineering Laboratory | 13,500 |
| National Physical Laboratory | 83,799 |
| Patent Office | 15,000 |
| Radiocommunications Agency | 35,842 |
| Total | 703,249 |

### Equal Opportunities

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what progress has been made within his Department on equal opportunities matters. [21532]

**Mr. Ian Taylor:** The Cabinet Office regularly publishes information on progress on equal opportunities matters in the civil service, including in the DTI. I refer the hon. Member to the following reports, copies of which are available in the Library of the House:

"Equal Opportunities in the Civil Service for people of Ethnic Minority Origin: Third Progress Report 1992–93"

"Equal Opportunities for Women in the Civil Service: 10 Year Progress Report 1984–1994"

"Civil Service Data Summary 1994: Women, Race, Disability".

In 1993 the DTI published a summary of progress on equal opportunities for female staff in the Department since 1984. I am placing a copy of this report in the Library of the House.

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what progress he hopes to achieve in his Department over the next three months to push forward the declaration signed in October 1994 at the Vienna conference in preparation for the 4th UN conference on women; and if he will incorporate a section on equal opportunities in his Department's annual report. [21534]

**Mr. Page:** The Government is committed to the principles set out in the Regional Platform for Action agreed at the preparatory conference in Vienna for the Fourth UN world conference on women. We have taken these forward through a wide range of programmes and initiatives and will continue to do so. We have also committed ourselves to publishing actions and progress on equal opportunities in annual reports from 1995–96 onwards.

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish the gender assessment being prepared by his Department. [21533]

**Mr. Page:** This Department's policy, in line with guidance issued in 1992 by the ministerial group on women's issues, is that policy proposals should ensure that unlawful or unjustifiable sex or race discrimination does not occur and that similar principles apply to people with disabilities, older people or ex-offenders. This scrutiny is part of a continuous and routine process, as part of policy advice to Ministers.

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade which Minister in his Department has responsibility for equal opportunities issues. [21531]

**Mr. Ian Taylor:** I am responsible for personnel issues within DTI including equal opportunities. My hon. Friend, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Energy sits on the ministerial sub-committee on women's issues.

### Nuclear Levy

**Mr. McFall:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proposals he has for compensating Scottish consumers following the Government's intentions to end the nuclear levy in England and Wales by 1996. [22028]

**Mr. Eggar:** The future of the market support arrangements in respect of nuclear power in the United Kingdom are under active consideration in the nuclear review. An announcement about the review's conclusions will be made shortly.

### Market Testing

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will estimate the cost of employing consultants in connection with market–testing programmes in which his Department has been engaged since their inception. [21377]

**Mr. Ian Taylor:** The estimated costs are £3 million for employing consultants in connection with market testing and contracting out, for programmes completed in my Department during the period 1 April 1992 to 31 March 1995.

### Exports

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the effect of the takeover of British manufacturers by their foreign competitors on the number of sales outlets for British goods overseas; and if he will make a statement about the number of those outlets that are now selling foreign in preference to British goods. [21416]

**Mr. Jonathan Evans:** None. United Kingdom export performance does not appear to be hampered by foreign takeovers, nor by a shortage of sales outlets: the value of UK exports grew by 46 per cent. between 1989 and 1994, to reach record levels.

### Trading Practices

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what study he has made of the means by which other nations give preference to their own products and discriminate against those of the United Kingdom; and what lessons he considers can be learnt from other nations' trading practices. [21424]

**Mr. Needham:** Following the successful conclusion of the GATT round, my Department has carried out consultations with the trade associations representing our leading export sectors to establish which remaining barriers to trade most frustrated their members' efforts. This was the first step in a continuing dialogue with industry. The results of the consultations, and the

Government's strategy to deal with priority barriers will be announced shortly.

### Trade Missions

**Mr. Rhodri Morgan:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the occasions on which he and his Ministerial colleagues have been on overseas trade missions in *(a)* 1992–93, *(b)* 1993–94 and *(c)* 1994–95; how many such visits are programmed for 1995–96; and if he will give the out-turn, estimated or anticipated cost for each year. [19217]

**Mr. Heseltine:** Details of overseas trade missions undertaken by me and my Department of Trade and Industry ministerial colleagues for the years requested, are as follows. The programme for 1995–96 is still subject to review and final details are not yet available.

| *Year* | *Dates* |
|---|---|
| *1992–93* | |
| United States | 26 March–9 April |
| United States | 3–6 May |
| Germany | 7–9 May |
| France | 18 May |
| Portugal | 1 June |
| Hong Kong, China | 21–20 July |
| India | 11–18 September |
| Argentina and Paraguay | 25 September–2 October |
| Russia | 27–30 September |
| Hong Kong, China | 23–28 October |
| Japan, China | 10–16 November |
| Hong Kong, Thailand, Indonesia, China | 26 December–9 January |
| Saudi Arabia | 8–11 January |
| Slovenia | 3–6 February |
| Japan | 4–10 March |
| Total estimated cost: (for Ministers and Private Secretaries) | £66,026.70 |
| *1993–94* | |
| Dubai, Qatar | 12–14 April |
| Hong Kong, Korea | 23–28 April |
| Japan | 24–27 April |
| United States | 29 April–5 May |
| Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain | 14–19 May |
| Denmark | 15 May |
| Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore | 29 May–5 June |
| Mexico, Argentina | 31 May–7 June |
| Luxembourg | 14 June |
| Republic of Ireland | 4–6 July |
| Turkey | 16–22 July |
| Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand | 10–18 September |
| Singapore | 11–16 September |
| Czech and Slovak Republics | 12–16 September |
| Brazil | 13–20 September |
| Japan, Malaysia | 17–23 September |
| Tanzania and Zimbabwe | 24 September—1 October |
| Kazahkstan | 28 September–2 October |
| Algeria | 11–12 October |
| China, Hong Kong, Taiwan | 17–24 October |
| China | 24–29 October |
| India | 16–18 November |
| Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore | 30 November—3 December |
| Portugal | 17 February |
| India, Sri Lanka | 21–28 February |
| Foreign Affairs Council–Brussels | 7 March |
| Morocco, Tunisia | 27-31 March |
| Total estimated cost: (for Ministers and Private Secretaries) | £142,473.28 |
| *1994–95* | |
| Oman, Saudi Arabia | 24–28 April |
| United States | 1–6 May |
| Ghana | 4–6 May |
| Oman | 13–15 May |
| Malaysia | 22–24 May |
| Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan | 22–27 May |
| Japan, Taiwan, Thailand, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Saudi Arabia | 29 May–14 June |
| Saudi Arabia | 27–28 June |
| South Africa | 9–15 July |
| Brussels | 17–19 July |
| Argentina, Brazil | 23–29 July |
| Brazil, Chile, Argentina | 7–17 September |
| Puerto Rica and Cuba | 7–9 September |
| Singapore, Australia, New Zealand | 10–24 September |
| Singapore, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Philippines | 13–26 October |
| United States, Colombia, Venezuela | 14–23 September |
| South Korea, Malaysia | 15–21 October |
| Japan | 13–17 November |
| India | 13–19 November |
| Egypt | 13–15 November |
| Austria | 27–29 November |
| Malta | 25–27 January |
| Japan | 27 January–1 February |
| United States | 6–7 February |
| Turkmenistan | 6–9 February |
| India | 14–16 February |
| Sri Lanka, India | 20–25 February |
| Saudi Arabia | 25–28 March |
| Total estimated cost: (for Ministers and Private Secretaries) | £175,480.90 |

### Local Enterprise Initiatives

**Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he will next meet the Institute of Directors to discuss new ways of encouraging its members to participate more closely with local enterprise initiatives. [21823]

**Mr. Eggar:** My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade, regularly meets representatives of the Institute of Directors to discuss a wide range of competitiveness issues.

### Car Boot Sales

**Mr. Spellar:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what estimates his Department has made of loss of revenue arising from car boot sales. [19960]

**Mr. Jonathan Evans:** Traders at car boot sales are liable for income tax and VAT in the same way as everybody else. The tax authorities have powers to investigate tax evasion, and use them, but it is not possible to produce a reliable estimate of any revenue lost.

### Fiches d'impact

**Mr. Steen:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many fiches d'impact have been issued in each year since 1986 by Directorate-General 23 of the European Commission; and what this figure is as a percentage of the total number of directives issued each year. [18680]

**Mr. Jonathan Evans** *[holding answer 18 April 1995]:* Commission archives indicate that between 1986 and 1990, all proposed legislation had a fiche d'impact. In 1991 a new system came into operation whereby fiches were targeted at those proposals for legislation which were likely to have substantial effect on enterprises, particularly small and medium sized firms.

The Commission does not hold central records which would enable the other statistics requested to be compiled without incurring disproportionate cost.

### Public Bodies

**Dr. Wright:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the executive non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department which are subject to *(a)* investigation by the Parliamentary Commissioner, *(b)* scrutiny by the Audit Commission, *(c)* scrutiny by the National Audit Office, *(d)* statutory provisions for open government, *(e)* performance indicators and *(f)* provisions under the citizens charter. [20665]

**Mr. Heseltine** *[holding answer 25 April 1995]:* The information requested is as follows:

(a) Design Council
(b) None
(c) Design Council
Monopolies and Mergers Commission
Simpler Trade Procedures Board
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority
National Consumer Council
Post Office Users' National Council
Post Office Users' Council for Northern Ireland
Post Office Users' Council for Wales
Post Office Users' Council for Scotland
Northern Ireland Advisory Committee on Telecommunications
Scottish Advisory Committee on Telecommunications
Welsh Advisory Committee on Telecommunications
Gas Consumer's Council
(d) None
(e) Design Council
Simpler Trade Procedures Board
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority
National Consumer Council
(f) Design Council
Simpler Trade Procedures Board
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority
Post Office Users' National Council
Post Office Users' Council for Northern Ireland
Post Office Users' Council for Wales
Post Office Users' Council for Scotland
Gas Consumers' Council

**Dr. Wright:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade which of the executive non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department have *(a)* a statutory requirement to admit members of the public to all board or committee meetings and *(b)* a statutory requirement to hold open meetings for the public. [20879]

**Mr. Heseltine** *[holding answer 26 April 1995]:* None.

### Imports

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what share of the market for manufactures he expects imports to take *(a)* in the current year and *(b)* next year. [21417]

**Mr. Nelson:** I have been asked to reply.

Forecasts for total imports of goods and services can be found in the November "Financial Statement and Budget Report", a copy of which is available in the House of Commons Library. Neither the Treasury nor the Department of Trade and Industry publishes forecasts for manufactured imports.

## ENVIRONMENT

### European Regional Development Fund

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 5 December, *Official Report*, column *11*, if he will list those projects in privatised companies which have received European regional development funding since privatisation indicating *(a)* the level of funding and *(b)* the dates when it was received. [20563]

**Sir Paul Beresford:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Energy earlier today.

### Manual Workers

**Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the average increase in real terms in the wages of local authority manual workers since 1979. [21060]

**Mr. Robert B. Jones:** Information from the "New Earnings Survey", adjusted by the retail prices index, indicates that the average increase in real terms from April 1979 to April 1994, the latest date for which information is available, in the wages of local authority manual workers in England and Wales was 24.5 per cent.

### Housing Associations

**Mr. Ainger:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the percentage grant available to English housing associations for new and existing properties in each year since 1979. [21082]

**Mr. Robert B. Jones** *[holding answer 26 April 1995]:* Prior to 1 April 1989, there were no published grant rates and the available grant was determined on a scheme-by-scheme basis. Since 1 April 1989, the average grant rates available to English housing associations for the development and rehabilitation of property have been:

1989–90: 75 per cent.
1990–91: 80 per cent.
1991–92: 77 per cent.
1992–93: 72 per cent.
1993–94: 67 per cent.
1994–95: 62 per cent.
1995–96: 58 per cent.

### Approved Development Programme

**Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide a breakdown of the ADP programme as between social housing and owner occupation. [21308]

**Mr. Robert B. Jones:** The Housing Corporation approved development programme is split into housing for rent programmes—mixed and public funded, short-life housing and miscellaneous works including major repair—and home ownership incentives and housing for sale programmes—tenants incentive scheme do-it-yourself shared ownership and construction and rehabilitation of property for shared ownership. TIS and DIYSO encourage home ownership and release existing lettings for others in housing need.

*The ADP for 1995–96 is as follows:*

| | *Expenditure (£ million)* | *Forecast lettings produced* |
|---|---|---|
| *Housing for rent* | | |
| Mixed and public funded | 784.7 | 32,700 |
| Short life housing | 23.0 | 3,300 |
| Miscellaneous works | 65.0 | — |
| Total rent | 872.7 | 36,000 |
| *Incentives and housing for sale* | | |
| Tenants Incentive Scheme | 85.8 | 7,200 |
| DIYSO | 121.9 | 4,700 |
| Shared ownership | 74.7 | 4,600 |
| Total incentive sale | 282.4 | 16,500 |
| Other expenditure | 26.0 | — |
| Total gross expenditure | 1,181.1 | — |

### Local Authority Staff

**Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many staff are employed by each local authority in the north-east region of England, including police forces, by broad service area. [21306]

**Mr. Robert B. Jones:** Numbers employed in June 1994 by each local authority in England, including police forces, were published in the joint staffing watch press release. A copy of the press release and the available service area information for metropolitan districts and non-metropolitan districts in the north-east have been placed in the Library of the House.

### Bridlepath, Ribble Valley

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what representations he has received about his decision to delete from the definitive maps the path and bridleway from Sawley lodge towards Gisburn in Ribble valley; [21232]

(2) what was the nature of the representations made to his Department by Mrs. Patricia Lord concerning the footpath and bridleway running through her land at Sawley lodge, Ribble valley; [21233]

(3) why he has directed Lancashire county council to delete from the definitive map the path and bridleway from Sawley lodge towards Gisburn in Ribble valley. [21231]

**Mr. Atkins:** The nature of representations made by Mrs. Lord and the reasons for the Secretary of State's decision were set out in the letter issued by the Government office for the north west on 21 December. I am sending the hon. Member for Pendle a copy of that letter and placing a copy in the House Library.

The Secretary of State has received one representation about his decision from Lancaster Association of Parish and Town Councils.

### Avian Pest Species

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the control of avian pest species. [21181]

**Sir Paul Beresford:** Annual general licences issued by my Department and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food permit the year-round control by authorised persons of 13 species of pest birds. Populations of the 13 species concerned are monitored to assess their conservation status. There is no evidence to suggest that current levels of pest control are threatening the status of any of these species.

### Cemfuel

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution has granted full authorisation to Castle Cement to allow the burning of cemfuel at Ribblesdale. [21234]

**Mr. Atkins:** I refer the hon. Member to my written reply of 24 February, *Official Report*, column *350*. HMIP is now considering carefully all comments received as a result of the public consultation exercise, together with the results from the monitoring and the environmental impact assessment undertaken by Castle Cement. A decision on whether to allow the burning of cemfuel as currently authorised will be made by HMIP following this review.

### Construction Industry

**Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish his Department's consultation paper on possible legislation for construction industry contracts in accordance with the recommendations of the Latham report; and if he will make a statement. [21196]

**Mr. Robert B. Jones:** I refer to the answer given to the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Cunningham) on 21 April, *Official Report*, column *286*.

### River Tees

**Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions have taken place between the National Rivers Authority and the Teesside development corporation about the level of the River Tees above the Tees barrage; and what conclusions have been reached. [21305]

**Sir Paul Beresford:** The Teesside development corporation has discussed with the National Rivers Authority whether or not the Tees Barrage has any material impact on the flood levels of the River Tees, during heavy winter flows in January and February 1995.

The TDC and NRA are now awaiting the results of studies by consultants relating to these issues.

### Equal Opportunities

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made within his Department on equal opportunities matters. [21597]

**Sir Paul Beresford:** The Department is committed to equality of opportunity for all employees. There are departmental action plans to achieve equality of opportunities for ethnic minorities and women based on the programmes for action in the civil service. Consultation within the Department is currently taking place on a draft departmental action plan in response to the programme for action for disabled people. Progress is reported to staff by means of an annual report which is published by the equal opportunities unit.

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which Minister in his Department has responsibility for equal opportunities issues. [21496]

**Sir Paul Beresford:** The Secretary of State has overall responsibility for all issues within the Department although the Viscount Ullswater has particular responsibility for women's issues.

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the gender assessment being prepared by his Department. [21498]

**Sir Paul Beresford:** This Department's policy, in line with guidance issued in 1992 by the ministerial group on womens' issues, is that policy proposals should ensure that unlawful or unjustifiable sex or race discrimination does not occur and that similar principles apply to people with disabilities, older people or ex-offenders. This scrutiny is part of a continuous and routine process, as part of policy advice to Ministers.

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress he hopes to make in the next three months to push forwards the declaration signed in October 1994 at the Vienna conference in preparation for the 4th UN conference on women; and if he will incorporate a section on equal opportunities in his Department's annual report. [21499]

**Sir Paul Beresford:** The Government are committed to the principles set out in the regional platform for action agreed at the preparatory conference in Vienna for the 4th UN world conference on women. We have taken these forward through a wide range of programmes and initiatives and will continue to do so.

The following paragraph on equal opportunities was published in the Department's annual report for 1995:

> "The Department of the Environment is an equal opportunities employer. This means that all staff (whether full—or part-time), applicants for posts, and members of the public are treated on the same fair basis irrespective of sex, sexual orientation or marital status, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, or disability."

### European Social Fund

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list those projects in privatised companies which have received European social fund support since privatisation indicating *(a)* the level of funding and *(b)* the dates when it was received; [21289]

(2) if he will list those public projects which received European social fund support and were subsequently privatised over the last 10 years, indicating *(a)* the level of funding and *(b)* the dates when it was received. [21288]

**Sir Paul Beresford:** None of the privatised companies for which my Department has responsibility has applied directly and received European social fund support since 1990. Information for the years before 1990 could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

### Conflicts of Interest

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on how many occasions during the last five years *(a)* civil servants and *(b)* special advisers in his Department or its agencies have declared conflicts of interest; and how many instructions have been issued about their retention, disposal or management. [21384]

**Sir Paul Beresford:** For the Department and agencies for which I am responsible any conflict of interest involving a civil servant would have been dealt with in accordance with established guidance. Records on the number of cases are not held centrally. In the last five years, five special advisors have declared 11 possible conflicts of interest.

### Market Testing

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the cost of employing consultants in connection with market testing programmes in which his Department has been engaged since their inception. [21367]

**Sir Paul Beresford:** From the inception of the market testing programme in April 1992 to 31 March 1995, departmental and agency expenditure on consultancies to support the "Competing and Quality" initiative has been almost £1.6 million. As reported in the "Market Testing Bulletin Special Report," dated January 1995, total results to the end of September 1994 have achieved annual savings of £14.6 million. In addition to the cash savings, there have been a number of improvements in the quality of services delivered.

### Barn Owls

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide estimates to show the change in the numbers of barn owls in England and Wales over the last 20 years. [21115]

**Sir Paul Beresford:** My Department's statutory scientific advisers, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, advise that the estimated population of barn owls in Great Britain and Ireland, when surveyed during 1968–72, was between 4,600 and 9,000 pairs. A survey carried out during 1982–85 estimated the population to be between 5,000 and 5,300 pairs. It is impossible to compare directly the results of different surveys, as different survey techniques may have been used.

### Falconry

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many permits have been issued to falconers to take protected species of birds as quarry in each year since 1988; what were the species in respect of which such permits were issued; and what were the numbers of each species taken. [21245]

**Sir Paul Beresford:** Details of licences issued to take protected species in the course of falconry in England for the period 1988–1993 are as listed. Figures are not yet available for 1994.

| *Species* | *Number of licences*[1] | *Birds killed* | *Year* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Aluda arvensis | 46 | 1773 (Total number of all species killed) | 1988 |
| Turdus merula | | | |
| Turdus philomelos | | | |
| Turdus pilaris | | | |
| Turdus iliacus | | | |
| Turdus viscivorous | | | |
| Anthus pratensis | | | |
| Larus ridibundas | | | |
| Aluda arvensis | 60 | No figures on the numbers of birds killed available | 1989 |
| Turdus merula | | | |
| Turdus philomelos | | | |
| Turdus pilaris | | | |
| Anthus pratensis | | | |
| Turdus iliacus | | | |
| Larus ridibundas | | | |
| Lagopus lagopus | | | |
| Perdix perdix | | | |
| Gallinula chlorpus | | | |
| Anas crecca | | | |
| Anas platyrhynchos | | | |
| Aluda arvensis | 61 | 236 | 1990 |
| Turdus merula | | 132 | |
| Turdus philomelos | | 20 | |
| Anthus pratensis | | 27 | |
| Larus ridibundas | | 2 | |
| Aluda arvensis | 59 | 259 | 1991 |
| Turdus merula | | 132 | |
| Turdus philomelos | | 20 | |
| Anthus pratensis | | 35 | |
| Larus ridibundas | | 2 | |
| Aluda arvensis | 59 | 137 | 1992 |
| Turdus merula | | 158 | |
| Turdus philomelos | | 25 | |
| Anthus pratensis | | 42 | |
| Larus ridibundas | | 0 | |
| Aluda arvensis | 72 | 171 | 1993 |
| Turdus merula | | 51 | |
| Turdus philomelos | | 9 | |
| Anthus pratensis | | 18 | |
| Larus ridibundas | | 10 | |

[1] Licences covered all or some of the named species.

### Birds of Prey

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many licences have been issued in each year since 1988 to possess birds of prey, and what were the numbers of birds in each species held under such licences. [21249]

**Sir Paul Beresford:** The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 permits a series of licences to be issued to take wild birds for a variety of purposes. Since 1988 my Department has not issued any licenses to take birds of prey from the wild.

### Wild Birds

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he is taking to ensure the adequate protection of migrating birds of protected species. [21116]

**Sir Paul Beresford:** Wild birds in the United Kingdom are protected by the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act which enacts our obligations under the EC directive on the conservation of wild birds. The Act does not permit migratory species to be hunted during their breeding or migration seasons.

The birds directive requires member states to take special conservation measures for certain vulnerable species, including the establishment of a network of special protection areas. To date 104 SPAs have been designated and more are planned.

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has made to his counterpart Ministers in the EEC concerning the shooting and trapping of protected species during migration and if he

will seek to persuade them to enforce in full the provisions of the appropriate European legislation. [21117]

**Sir Paul Beresford:** The European Commission has proposed an amendment to the birds directive to give guidance on the hunting of migratory birds. The proposal has been considered by the Council of Ministers and has been referred to the European Parliament for an opinion. When that opinion is received, the Council of Ministers will consider its implications for the hunting of migratory birds.

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is the number of sites which meet the criteria for designation and protection under the European Community directive on the conservation of wild birds, the number of sites so designated, the name of the site next to be designated and the date he expects to designate it; [21118]

(2) when he last designated an area under the Ramsar convention on the conservation of wetlands of international importance, which area is next to be designated and when he expects to designate it; [21119]

(3) if he will list those special protection areas, under the EC birds directive, as well as those Ramsar sites and areas with dual designation for the protection of birds. [21120/95]

**Sir Paul Beresford:** The list of those areas identified on the basis of scientific evidence as potentially qualifying for classification as special protection areas is currently under review. The list will be published in due course and a copy will be placed in the Library. The next English site to be designated is expected to be placed in the Blackwater estuary in Essex. It is a SPA and Ramsar site. An announcement will be made shortly.

We announced the listing of two Ramsar sites at the end of March 1995: River Crouch marshes, Essex, was listed on 24 March and Coll, Strathclyde, was listed on 31 March.

The United Kingdom has designated 104 special protection areas and listed 88 Ramsar sites. The following 62 sites have dual SPA/Ramsar designation:

*UK sites classified as special protection areas under EC birds directive and wetlands of International importance under the Ramsar Convention*

| *Name* | *County/region* | *Date designated* | *Area (ha)* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Loch Druidibeg, A'Machair | Western Isles | 31 August 1982 | 1,043.0 |
| 2. Ribble Estuary | Lancashire | 31 August 1982 | 2,182.0 |
| 3. The Swale | Kent | 31 August 1982 | 113.0 |
| | extended | 17 July 1985 | 5,722.0 |
| | further extended | 15 December 1993 | 421.7 |
| 4. Chesil Beach and The Fleet | Dorset | 17 July 1985 | 763.0 |
| 5. The Dee Estuary | Merseyside, Cheshire and Clwyd | 17 July 1985 | 13,055.0 |
| 6. Derwent Ings (part of Lower Derwent Valley) | North Yorkshire | 17 July 1985 | 783.0 |
| 7. Holburn Moss | Northumberland | 17 July 1985 | 22.0 |
| 8. Alt Estuary | Merseyside | 28 November 1985 | 1,160.0 |
| 9. Leighton Moss | Lancashire | 28 November 1985 | 124.0 |
| 10. Martin Mere | Lancashire | 28 November 1985 | 119.0 |
| 11. Loch Eye | Highland | 23 September 1986 | 195.0 |
| 12. Loch of Skene | Grampian | 23 September 1986 | 125.0 |
| 13. Rockliffe Marshes (Pt Upper Solway Flats and Marshes) | Cumbria | 23 September 1986 | 1,897.0 |
| 14. Chichester and Langstone Harbours | Hampshire/Sussex | 28 October 1987 | 5,764.0 |
| 15. Upper Severn Estuary | Gloucestershire | 5 February 1988 | 1,357.0 |
| 16. The Wash | Lincs/Norfolk | 30 March 1988 | 63,124.0 |
| 17. Pagham Harbour | West Sussex | 30 March 1988 | 615.0 |
| 18. Din Moss—Hoselaw Loch | Borders | 14 July 1988 | 45.7 |
| 19. Gladhouse Reservoir | Lothian | 14 July 1988 | 186.5 |
| 20. Bridgend Flats, Islay | Strathclyde | 14 July 1988 | 331.0 |
| 21. Duich Moss, Islay | Strathclyde | 14 July 1988 | 574.0 |
| 22. Gruinart Flats, Islay | Strathclyde | 14 July 1988 | 3,170.0 |
| 23. North Norfolk Coast | Norfolk | 20 January 1989 | 7,700.0 |
| 24. Fala Flow | Midlothian | 25 April 1990 | 323.0 |
| 25. Glac-na-Criche | Islay | 25 April 1990 | 265.0 |
| 26. Feur Lochain | Islay | 25 April 1990 | 384.1 |
| 27. Rutland Water | Leics | 4 October 1991 | 1,540.0 |
| 28. Abberton Reservoir | Essex | 5 December 1991 | 716.3 |
| 29. Walmore Common | Gloucs | 5 December 1991 | 51.4 |
| 30. Exe Estuary | Devon | 11 March 1992 | 2,388.6 |
| 31. Lindisfarne | Northumberland | 11 March 1992 | 3,625.2 |
| 32. Old Hall Marshes | Essex | 11 March 1992 | 627.1 |
| 33. Minsmere-Walberswick | Suffolk | 19 May 1992 | 2,000.3 |
| 34. Burry Inlet | Dyfed/W Glam | 14 July 1992 | 6,660.0 |
| 35. Loch Ken and Dee Marshes | Dumfries and Galloway | 31 August 1992 | 773.4 |
| 36. Loch Spynie | Grampian | 31 August 1992 | 93.0 |
| 37. Upper Solway Flats and Marshes | Cumbria, Dumfries and Galloway | 30 November 1992 | 28,053.0 |
| 38. Nene Washes | Cambs | 5 March 1993 | 1,310.0 |
| 39. Ouse Washes | Cambs/Norfolk | 5 March 1993 | 2,372.0 |
| 40. Gibraltar Point (Wash Phase II) | Lincolnshire | 5 March 1993 | 414.0 |
| 41. South Tayside Goose Roosts | Tayside | 22 April 1993 | 408.7 |

*UK sites classified as special protection areas under EC birds directive and wetlands of International importance under the Ramsar Convention*

| *Name* | *County/region* | *Date designated* | *Area (ha)* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 42. Hamford Water | Essex | 8 June 1993 | 2,179.3 |
| 43. Lower Derwent Valley | N Yorks and Humberside | 8 June 1993 | 306.4 |
| 44. New Forest | Hampshire | 22 September 1993 | 28,001.2 |
| 45. Medway Estuary | Kent | 15 December 1993 | 4,681.8 |
| 46. Stodmarsh | Kent | 16 December 1993 | 481.3 |
| 47. Benfleet and Southend Marshes | Essex | 14 February 1994 | 2,251.3 |
| 48. Thursley, Hankley and Frensham Commons (Wealden Heaths Phase I) | Surrey/Hants | 14 February 1994 | 1,869.9 |
| 49. Cameron Reservoir | Fife | 14 March 1994 | 64.4 |
| 50. Dengie (Mid-Essex Coast Phase I) | Essex | 24 March 1994 | 3,127.2 |
| 51. Loch of Kinnordy | Tayside | 29 March 1994 | 86.0 |
| 52. Stour and Orwell | Essex/Suffolk | 13 July 1994 | 3,334.1 |
| 53. Humber Flats and Marshes | Humberside and Lincs | 28 July 1994 | 15,230.3 |
| 54. Thanet Coast and Sandwich Bay | Kent | 28 July 1994 | 1,877.0 |
| 55. Colne (Mid-Essex Coast Phase II) | Essex | 28 July 1994 | 2,701.4 |
| 56. Loch Maree | Highland | 19 September 1994 | 3,100.0 |
| 57. Broadland | Norfolk/Suffolk | 21 September 1994 | 4,645.9 |
| 58. Montrose Basin | Tayside | 3 February 1995 | 987.0 |
| 59. Ribble and Alt Estuaries Phase II | Lancashire/Merseyside | 16 February 1995 | 8,768.4 |
| 60. Portsmouth Harbour | Hampshire | 28 February 1995 | 1,248.4 |
| 61. River Crouch Marshes | Essex | 24 March 1995 | 905.7 |
| 62. Coll | Strathclyde | 31 March 1995 | 2,291.9 |
| Total | | | 250,735.0 |

### Hospitality

**Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much was spent on official hospitality by his Department in 1994–95. [21212]

**Sir Paul Beresford:** Expenditure on official hospitality by my Department, including Property Holdings and the Department's agencies, was approximately £121,000 in 1994–95.

### Civil Service Appointments

**Mr. Ainger:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many civil service appointments were made to administrative assistant and administrative officer posts in his Department and the agencies for which he is accountable in each quarter from September 1993 until April 1995. [21769]

**Sir Paul Beresford:** The following information covers permanent administrative staff in my Department, excluding Ordnance Survey and PSA Services.

Q4–1993: 6
Q1–1994: 1
Q2–1994: 5
Q3–1994: 2
Q4–1994: 8
Q1–1995: 4

## EMPLOYMENT

### Female Work Force

**Mrs. Peacock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of women in the United Kingdom have jobs; and what are the figures for other major European countries. [16521]

**Miss Widdecombe** *[holding answer 27 March 1995]:* The most recent comparable estimates between the United Kingdom and other major European countries are for 1992 and are given in the following table.

The most recent information for the United Kingdom is for spring 1994, when the rate was 65 per cent.

*Total female employment as a percentage of the female population ages 15–59*

| *Country* | *1992* |
|---|---|
| Sweden* | 76 |
| Denmark | 74 |
| United Kingdom | 64 |
| Finland* | 63 |
| Germany | 60 |
| Portugal | 58 |
| Austria* | 56 |
| France | 55 |
| Netherlands | 54 |
| Luxembourg | 50 |
| Belgium | 49 |
| Italy | 39 |
| Greece | 38 |
| Ireland | 38 |
| Spain | 33 |

*Source:* Labour Force Survey.

* ages 15–64.

### Redundancies

**Ms Harman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list those companies reporting redundancies where the number of redundancies was fewer than 20; and what was the total number of redundancies reported by those firms where the number of redundancies was fewer than 20, in each case breaking the data down by industrial sector, gender and region. [21047]

**Mr. Oppenheim** *[holding answer 26 April 1995]:* Information supplied by individual employers under the statutory redundancy notification arrangements is given in confidence. No analysis is kept by gender. The remaining information requested is in the following table, which relates to 1994.

*Redundancies of <20 employees notified under s193 trade union and labour relations (consolidation) act 1992: 1994*

| Sector | South West | West Midlands | East Midlands and Eastern | North | North West | Yorkshire and Humberside | Wales | Scotland | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Agriculture, forestry, fishing | 40 | 28 | 50 | 13 | 27 | — | — | 10 | — | 168 |
| Energy and water supply | 243 | 75 | 30 | 314 | 77 | — | — | 12 | — | 751 |
| Minerals, ores, metals, chemicals | 104 | 39 | 167 | 200 | 102 | 43 | 177 | 86 | 222 | 1,140 |
| Metal goods, engineering, vehicles | 1,377 | 430 | 557 | 580 | 164 | 674 | 486 | 227 | 572 | 5,067 |
| Other manufacturing industries | 689 | 283 | 814 | 827 | 320 | 845 | 490 | 183 | 587 | 5,038 |
| Construction | 483 | 150 | 288 | 380 | 345 | 626 | 288 | 106 | 1,041 | 3,707 |
| Distribution, hotels and catering, repairs | 1,548 | 673 | 704 | 854 | 199 | 968 | 384 | 276 | 403 | 6,009 |
| Transport and communication | 589 | 182 | 129 | 250 | 81 | 240 | 213 | 34 | 260 | 1,978 |
| Banking, finance, business services, leasing | 1,991 | 418 | 288 | 350 | 105 | 589 | 225 | 39 | 333 | 4,338 |
| Other services | 1,622 | 490 | 530 | 371 | 318 | 607 | 393 | 74 | 314 | 4,719 |
| Total | 8,686 | 2,768 | 3,557 | 4,139 | 1,738 | 4,592 | 2,656 | 1,047 | 3,732 | 32,915 |

*Note:*
Under s193 of the TULR(C) Act 1992, an employer is required to notify the Secretary of State for Employment of 10 or more proposed redundancies occurring at one establishment within a period of 30 days or less.

### Stockport Training and Enterprise Council

**Mr. Andrew F. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many of the directors of Stockport TEC have received payments from TEC funds for services provided to the TEC; what these were and when; and if such payments will continue in 1995–96. [21176]

**Mr. Paice:** I understand from Stockport and High Peak training and enterprise council that none of the TEC's directors has ever received payment from TEC funds for services provided to the TEC. TEC directors receive no payment from the TEC for their services.

**Mr. Andrew F. Bennet:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment on how many occasions the hotel owned by a Stockport TEC director has been used by the Stockport TEC for training or other purposes, for which that director's hotel has received payment; how much was paid; and when and how many of these hotel bookings were the subject of competitive tenders. [21175]

**Mr. Paice:** I understand from Stockport and High Peak training and enterprise council that one of their directors owns a hotel which has been used by the TEC. The occasions on which the hotel has been used by the TEC since its inception in 1991 are shown in the following table:

| Year | Occasions | £ |
|---|---|---|
| 1991 | Three | 3,537.14 |
| 1992 | Three | 2,098.47 |
| 1993 | Four | 1,764.27 |
| 1994 | One | 63.83 |
| 1995 | One | 126.74 |

The TEC uses a wide range of venues throughout its area and does not normally use competitive tendering for these bookings. However, in cases of significant expenditure the TEC will seek out comparative prices. TECs are required to comply with published guidelines on the business interest of directors.

### Equal Opportunities

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how he intends to consult on the Vienna declaration prior to the UN conference on women in Beijing; to which interested groups the Vienna declaration has been circulated for comment; and what steps he has taken to progress the implementation of the Vienna declaration signed in October 1994. [21309]

**Miss Widdecombe:** Throughout the preparatory phase for the fourth world conference on women, the Government have been in continuous dialogue with women's non-governmental organisations and other interested groups. More than 500 copies of the regional platform for action agreed at the preparatory conference in Vienna have been circulated to NGOs, local authorities, academic institutions, trade unions, businesses and all members and associate members of the Women's National Commission. The Government are committed to the principles set out in the regional platform for action and are taking these forward through a wide range of programmes and initiatives.

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what progress he hopes to achieve in his Department over the next three months to push forward the declaration signed in October 1994 at the Vienna Conference in preparation for the fourth UN conference on women; and if he will agree to incorporate a section on equal opportunities in his Department's annual report. [21463]

**Miss Widdecombe:** The Government are committed to the principles set out in the regional platform for action agreed at the preparatory conference in Vienna for the

fourth UN conference on women. We have taken these forward through a wide range of programmes and initiatives and will continue to do so.

In line with the Government White Paper, "Taking Forward Continuity and Change", the Department will publish actions and progress on equal opportunities in its annual report from 1995–96.

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what progress has been made within his Department on equal opportunities matters. [21461]

**Miss Widdecombe:** Good progress is being made towards the numerical benchmarks for the employment of women, ethnic minorities and disabled people in the Employment Department Group for the year 2000, and towards implementing the agreed recommendations of a report which investigated the causes of the under-representation of women at senior levels in the group. A number of initiatives to help staff combine work and domestic responsibilities have been introduced, including part-time and alternative working arrangements; homeworking; career breaks and special leave arrangements. There is support for child care through six workplace nurseries and 35 holiday play schemes. A programme has recently been introduced for staff from ethnic minorities to enable them to compete more effectively for jobs in areas where they are under-represented. An advisory group on women has been set up to advise on how policies and practices in the ED group impact on women.

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish the gender assessment being prepared by his Department. [21460]

**Miss Widdecombe:** This Department's policy, in line with guidance issued in 1992 by the ministerial group on women's issues, is that policy proposals should ensure that unlawful or unjustifiable sex or race discrimination does not occur and that similar principles apply to people with disabilities, older people or ex-offenders. This scrutiny is part of a continuous and routine process, as part of policy advice to Ministers.

### Training Expenditure

**Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the total amount of spending on training for the last available year, indicating the proportion of spending accounted for by finance from the European Union for the United Kingdom as a whole and for each standard region. [20375]

**Mr. Paice:** It is estimated that British employers currently spend over £20,000 million a year on training and developing their employees. The total amount of European social fund spent on training in Great Britain in the 1993 calendar year was £580 million. Responsibility for training matters in Northern Ireland lies with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

### Apprenticeships

**Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list in constant prices the average annual earnings of apprentices, and average length of apprenticeships, for the United Kingdom and for each standard employment region for *(a)* 1975, *(b)* 1979, *(c)* 1985, *(d)* 1990 and *(e)* the last three available years. [20378]

**Mr. Paice:** The information is not available.

### Market Testing

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will estimate the cost of employing consultants in connection with market testing programmes in which his Department has been engaged since their inception. [21366]

**Miss Widdecombe:** The cost of employing consultants to give support to the Employment Department Group's "Competing for Quality" programme for the period 1 April 1992 to 31 March 1995 was around £3.1 million.

### Conflicts of Interest

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment on how many occasions during the last five years *(a)* civil servants and *(b)* special advisers in his Department or its agencies have declared conflicts of interest; and how many instructions have been issued about their retention, disposal or management. [21383]

**Miss Widdecombe:** The information requested in the first part of the question is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Instructions on declaring conflicts of interest are contained in the Department's group personnel handbook. All members of staff must comply with these instructions and any subsequent instructions about the retention, disposal or management of such interests.

### Civil Servants

**Mr. Ainger:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many civil service appointments were made to administrative assistant and administrative officer posts in his Department and the agencies for which he is accountable in each quarter from September 1993 until April 1995. [21770]

**Miss Widdecombe:** The information requested is shown in the following table:

| | | *Part of ED Group* | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | *ED* | *HSE* | *ACAS* | *Total* | *ES Agency* |
| *Quarter* | | | | | | |
| 1 October 1993 to | AA | 0 | 6 | 0 | 6 | 45 |
| 31 December 1993 | AO | 3 | 2 | 0 | 5 | 441 |
| 1 January 1994 to | AA | 3 | 2 | 0 | 5 | 92 |
| 31 March 1994 | AO | 4 | 1 | 0 | 5 | 527 |
| 1 April 1994 to | AA | 5 | 10 | 1 | 16 | 26 |
| 30 June 1994 | AO | 5 | 8 | 1 | 14 | 129 |
| 1 July 1994 to | AA | 1 | 12 | 1 | 14 | 18 |
| 30 September 1994 | AO | 4 | 4 | 0 | 8 | 193 |
| 1 October 1994 to | AA | 1 | 9 | 0 | 10 | 5 |
| 31 December 1994 | AO | 7 | 6 | 0 | 13 | 71 |
| 1 January 1995 to | AA | 6 | 9 | 0 | 15 | 0 |
| 31 March 1995 | AO | 5 | 2 | 0 | 7 | 2 |

AA = Administrative assistant AO = Administrative officer.

### Training, Teesside

**Dr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which travel-to-work areas are served by *(a)* the East Cleveland training and employment group and *(b)* the Teesside TEC. [21432]

**Mr. Paice:** Teesside training and enterprise council serves three travel-to-work areas: Middlesbrough, Stockton and Hartlepool. East Cleveland training and employment group operates in the Middlesbrough travel-to-work area.

**Dr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the expenditure of the Teesside training and enterprise council in each of the last 10 years. [21434]

**Mr. Paice:** Teesside training and enterprise council was established in 1990. The TEC's expenditure is shown in the following table:

| *Year* | *Expenditure (£ millions)* |
|---|---|
| 1989–90 | 0.133 (Development funding) |
| 1990–91 | 27.5 |
| 1991–92 | 27.7 |
| 1992–93 | 28.4 |
| 1993–94 | 30.9 |
| 1994–95[1] | |

[1] Audited accounts not available yet.

**Dr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his estimate of the number of people for whose training the Teesside TEC has been responsible in each of the last 10 years *(a)* in each skill area and *(b)* in total. [21435]

**Mr. Paice:** The following table provides an occupational breakdown of the numbers of people trained by Teesside training and enterprise council since it was established in 1990.

*Teesside TEC training by occupational area*

| *Occupational Areas* | | *Numbers trained (young persons and adults) 1990–91* | *1991–92* | *1992–93* | *1993–94* | *1994–95* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Managerial and Professional | 0 | 452 | 439 | 426 | 406 | 390 |
| | 1 | 66 | 64 | 62 | 59 | 57 |
| | 2 | 98 | 96 | 93 | 88 | 85 |
| | 3 | 111 | 107 | 105 | 100 | 96 |
| | 4 | 556 | 540 | 524 | 499 | 480 |
| | 5 | 17 | 17 | 16 | 16 | 15 |
| | 6 | 251 | 244 | 237 | 226 | 217 |
| | 7 | 203 | 197 | 191 | 182 | 175 |
| | 8 | 1,263 | 1,226 | 1,190 | 1,134 | 1,090 |
| Clerical | 9 | 554 | 538 | 522 | 497 | 478 |
| Construction | 10 | 1,033 | 1,003 | 974 | 928 | 892 |
| Engineering and electrical making and repairing occupations | 11 | 802 | 778 | 756 | 720 | 692 |
| | 12 | 206 | 200 | 194 | 185 | 178 |
| | 13 | 534 | 518 | 503 | 479 | 461 |
| | 14 | 159 | 154 | 150 | 142 | 137 |
| | 15 | 950 | 922 | 895 | 853 | 820 |
| | 6 | 70 | 67 | 66 | 62 | 60 |
| Catering | 17 | 239 | 232 | 225 | 214 | 206 |
| Healthcare | 18 | 848 | 823 | 799 | 761 | 732 |
| | 19 | 278 | 270 | 262 | 250 | 240 |
| Sales Occupations | 20 | 15 | 15 | 14 | 14 | 13 |
| | 21 | 1,100 | 1,069 | 1,037 | 988 | 950 |
| Miscellaneous Assembly | 22 | 474 | 460 | 447 | 425 | 409 |
| Driving | 23 | 101 | 98 | 95 | 91 | 87 |
| Agriculture | 24 | 127 | 124 | 121 | 114 | 110 |
| Others | 25 | 2,092 | 2,031 | 1,972 | 1,878 | 1,806 |
| | Totals | 12,599 | 12,232 | 11,876 | 11,311 | 10,876 |

### Low Pay

**Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement about the trend in real take-home pay among those men in the lowest decile of earnings since 1979. [21571]

**Sir George Young:** I have been asked to reply.

Real take-home pay for a single man at the lowest decile of male earnings has risen by nearly a quarter since 1978–79. It fell slightly between 1973–74 and 1978–79.

## TREASURY

### Income Tax

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide, on the same basis as in table, 2.7, "Inland Revenue Statistics 1994", estimates for income tax liabilities for 1995–96 in an income range form £3,525 to £100,000, supplying data at intervals of not more than £10,000. [21005]

**Sir George Young** *[holding answer 25 April 1995]:* Available estimates based on a projection of the 1992–93 survey of personal incomes are given in the following table.

The main reason for higher numbers of taxpayers is increasing prosperity—real incomes have increased by 40 per cent. since 1979—and the number of people in employment increased by 174,000 during 1994.

*Income tax liabilities, by income range, 1995–96*[1]

| *Range of total income (lower limit)* | *Tax liability at lower rate* | | *Tax liability at basic rate* | | *Tax liability at excess over basic rate* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| £ | *Number of taxpayers* | *Amount taxpayers* | *Number of taxpayers* | *Amount* | *Number of taxpayers* | *Amount* |
| 3,525 | 1.9 | 260 | — | — | — | — |
| 5,000 | 4.1 | 1,920 | 0.8 | 70 | — | — |
| 7,500 | 3.8 | 2,440 | 3.7 | 1,510 | — | — |
| 10,000 | 6.1 | 3,890 | 6.1 | 7,710 | — | — |
| 15,000 | 4.1 | 2,620 | 4.1 | 10,100 | — | — |
| 20,000 | 3.9 | 2,490 | 3.9 | 15,800 | 0.2 | 30 |
| 30,000 | 1.2 | 770 | 1.2 | 7,740 | 1.2 | 870 |
| 40,000 | 1.0 | 670 | 1.0 | 15,500 | 1.0 | 6,010 |
| All ranges | 26.2 | 15,100 | 20.8 | 58,500 | 2.4 | 6,910 |

*Numbers: millions; amounts: £ million*

| *Range of total income (lower limit)* £ | *Total tax liability before tax credit* | *Total tax liability after tax Credit* | *Average rate of tax Percentage* | *Average amount of tax* £ |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3,525 | 260 | 250 | 3 | 130 |
| 5,000 | 2,000 | 1,720 | 7 | 420 |
| 7,500 | 3,940 | 3,460 | 10 | 910 |
| 10,000 | 11,600 | 10,300 | 14 | 1,670 |
| 15,000 | 12,700 | 11,500 | 16 | 2,800 |
| 20,000 | 18,400 | 16,900 | 18 | 4,340 |
| 30,000 | 9,380 | 8,850 | 22 | 7,380 |
| 40,000 | 22,200 | 21,700 | 30 | 20,730 |
| All ranges | 80,500 | 74,600 | 18 | 2,850 |

[1] Provisional.

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update table 2.9, "Inland Revenue Statistics 1994", providing estimates for 1995–96. [21006]

**Sir George Young** *[holding answer 25 April 1995]:* Provisional estimates projected from the 1992–93 survey of personal incomes are given in the table:

*Income tax liabilities of lower, basic and higher rate taxpayers by range of total income by source, 1995–96*[1]

| *Range of total income (lower limit)* | *Main source Schedule E pay or occupational pension* | | *Main source Schedule D case I or II profits* | | *Other main sources* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| £ | *Number of taxpayers* | *Total amount of tax* | *Number of taxpayers*[2] | *Total amount of tax*[3] | *Number of taxpayers* | *Total amount* |
| *Taxpayers liable only at the lower rate* | | | | | | |
| 3,525 | 4,490 | 1,270 | 550 | 150 | 320 | 80 |
| 20,000 | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| 30,000 | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Total | 4,490 | 1,270 | 550 | 150 | 320 | 80 |
| *Taxpayers liable at the basic rate (excluding higher rate taxpayers* | | | | | | |
| 3,525 | 12,800 | 22,800 | 1,570 | 2,450 | 280 | 420 |
| 20,000 | 3,320 | 14,200 | 330 | 1,350 | 40 | 170 |
| 30,000 | 20 | 90 | 10 | 50 | — | — |
| Total | 16,200 | 37,100 | 1,900 | 3,850 | 320 | 590 |

*Income tax liabilities of lower, basic and higher rate taxpayers by range of total income by source, 1995–96*[1]

| *Range of total income (lower limit)* | *Main source Schedule E pay or occupational pension* | | *Main source Schedule D case I or II profits* | | *Other main sources* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| £ | *Number of taxpayers* | *Total amount of tax* | *Number of taxpayers*[2] | *Total amount of tax*[3] | *Number of taxpayers* | *Total amount* |
| *Taxpayers liable at the higher rate* | | | | | | |
| 3,525 | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| 20,000 | 180 | 1,040 | 30 | 170 | 10 | 40 |
| 30,000 | 1,360 | 11,500 | 230 | 1,990 | 30 | 310 |
| 50,000 | 350 | 6,600 | 110 | 2,070 | 10 | 220 |
| 100,000 | 80 | 4,830 | 40 | 2,530 | 10 | 350 |
| Total | 1,970 | 24,000 | 400 | 6,760 | 60 | 930 |

[1] Provisional.
[2] Numbers = thousands.
[3] Amounts = £ million.

The main reason for higher numbers of taxpayers is increasing prosperity—real incomes have increased by 40 per cent. since 1979—and the number of people in employment increased by 174,000 during 1994.

### Mr. Stephen Crouch

**Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the relationship between his Department and Mr. Stephen Crouch. [21689]

**Mr. Nelson** *[holding answer 28 April 1995]:* There is no such relationship.

### Mr. Edmund Sykes

**Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the relationship between his Department and Mr. Edmund Sykes. [21690]

**Mr. Nelson** *[holding answer 28 April 1995]:* There is no such relationship.

### Leeds-Halifax Building Society

**Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the effect on *(a)* consumer expenditure and *(b)* the growth of gross domestic product, of the planned share distribution by the planned Leeds-Halifax building society merger and conversion, on the basis of current plans and current market capitalisation. [21431]

**Mr. Nelson** *[holding answer 28 April 1995]:* The societies have not published details of the share distribution which will form part of their proposed conversion. So it has not been possible to make an estimate of any wider economic effects of the conversion. Any estimate would, in any case, be subject to a great deal of uncertainty, because of the assumptions which would have to be made about the behaviour of those investors receiving a share distribution.

### Inward Investment

**Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the quantitative impact on inward investment into the United Kingdom of an increase of *(a)* 1p, *(b)* 2p and *(c)* 5p on corporation tax; and if he will make a statement. [20919]

**Sir George Young:** Taxation is one of a number of factors which businesses take into account when deciding the location for investment. The United Kingdom has the lowest main rate of corporation tax among the major industrial countries. The UK's low corporation tax rates have contributed, along with the openness of the UK economy, low labour costs, a well educated and flexible workforce and good communications, to the UK becoming the second largest recipient of foreign direct investment worldwide.

### Public Sector Pay

**Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what guidelines govern public sector salary increases in areas where the state enjoys monopoly power; and if he will make a statement. [20931]

**Mr. Aitken:** The Government expect pay in the public sector to be considered in accordance with the approach that my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor announced on 14 September 1994. The running costs of central Government Departments and provision for the rest of the public sector have been set on the basis that pay and price increases should be offset, or more than offset, by efficiencies and other economies. Generally, pay in all parts of the public sector should be set at levels necessary to recruit, retain and motivate staff within the available cash levels.

### Chief Secretary

**Mr. Byers:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what contribution has been made or is planned to be made to the legal costs incurred by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury in his action for libel against the Guardian newspaper. [21842]

**Mr. Aitken:** None.

**Mr. Byers:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many press notices or statements have been made by his Department concerning the private business activities and associated allegations relating to the Chief Secretary to the Treasury since his appointment; and what is the estimated cost involved. [21843]

**Mr. Aitken:** None. Treasury officials have passed on a number of inquiries from the press to me and on a number of occasions have passed my replies back. Very little of their time has been involved.

### Regulators

**Mr. Ingram:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the annual total cost of each of the regulators of the privatised utilities. [21838]

**Sir George Young:** The provision for 1994–95 and 1995–96 for the offices of the privatised utilities are as follows:

| | £ thousands | |
|---|---|---|
| | *1994–95* | *1995–96* |
| Office of Telecommunications | 9,358 | 9,464 |
| Office of Gas Supply | 4,524 | 5,352 |
| Office of Electricity Regulation | 10,871 | 10,567 |
| Office of Water Services | 9,544 | 8,146 |

*Source:*
Supply Estimates 1995–96, HM Treasury, March 1995.

The cost of funding the offices of the regulators is fully recovered by licence fees paid by the regulated companies. Income from fees is surrendered to the consolidated fund. There is no net cost to the taxpayer.

### Incapacity Benefit

**Mr. Dewar:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people he estimates will pay tax on incapacity benefit in each of the next three financial years; and what will be the average increase in tax payable as a result of the extension of tax to invalidity in each of these years and the total yield to the Treasury. [17348]

**Sir George Young:** Estimates for new claimants of incapacity benefit and the total tax yield are given in the table. No-one already receiving invalidity benefit will pay tax on their incapacity benefit so long as they remain incapable of work.

*New claimants of incapacity benefit*

| | *1995–96* | *1996–97* | *1997–98* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Number of new claimants | 300,000 | 550,000 | 700,000 |
| of which taxpayers | 200,000 | 300,000 | 350,000 |
| Yield (£ million) | 35 | 70 | 95 |

Estimates are based on survey data and are subject to some uncertainty. Claimant figures have been rounded to the nearest 50,000.

### Washington Visit

**Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the extent of the briefing by Her Majesty's Government's Treasury officials and Ministers to the right hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) for his trip to Washington in 1986. [20608]

**Sir George Young:** No briefing was asked for and none was given. The views of the Government on unitary tax were well known, and were stated by the then Financial Secretary in the House on 9 July, *Official Report*, column *1031*.

**Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what financial contribution Her Majesty's Treasury made towards the flight of the right hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) on Concorde to Washington in 1986. [20607]

**Sir George Young:** None.

### Unitary Tax

**Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what advice the Government gave to the unitary tax campaign on what class of aircraft travel hon. Members travelling in support of the campaign should use. [20580]

**Sir George Young:** None.

**Mr. David Shaw:** To ask The Chancellor of the Exchequer if Her Majesty's Government financially supported the unitary tax campaign. [20609]

**Sir George Young:** No.

### Unpaid Taxation

**Mr. John Spellar:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 18 April to the hon. Member for Gordon, (Mr. Bruce) *Official Report*, column *37*, which part of the contract comprised the £3 million that was let to overseas contractors. [21034]

**Sir George Young:** Some £3.5 million worth of work, excluding VAT, was let to two overseas contractors as part of the construction cost of the new Inland Revenue centre in Nottingham. Grill and Grossman of Austria undertook cladding and glazing work on the centre's amenity building. Koit High Tex of Germany provided the fabric roof and support steel for this building.

The previous figure of £3 million did not include the cost of an outstanding claim by one of the firms, which has now been settled. The £3.5 million is the final outturn figure in respect of these two firms.

### Self Assessment

**Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the implementation of tax self assessment by the Inland Revenue. [21135]

**Sir George Young:** Self assessment will apply to those people who receive tax returns. The main legislative changes required have now been enacted, partly in the Finance Act 1994 and partly in this year's Finance Act. Self assessment is a more modern and straightforward system that will give taxpayers greater clarity about their tax affairs.

The Inland Revenue has been consulting with interested parties on the introduction of self assessment since 1990, and that consultation is continuing. The intention is to explore ways to make the new system as practical and simple as possible to operate, and particularly to keep any compliance costs to a minimum.

Self assessment will first apply to the tax year 1996–97 and the first new tax returns will be issued in April 1997. The Inland Revenue recognises the importance of ensuring taxpayers, employers, tax practitioners and its own staff are well prepared for the new system. It has developed a comprehensive programme to achieve this. It includes:

- extensive training of its staff on the new system and procedures, and to help them provide guidance to taxpayers about self assessment;
- a comprehensive customer service programme to inform and assist taxpayers so that they can understand the new system and comply with their obligations;
- extensive and continuing testing of the new tax return form, and consulting on its design, to make it as simple as possible for taxpayers to complete;
- a full trial of self assessment, involving some 5,000 taxpayers, which recently started in Leicester; and

a major public information campaign, using television and press advertising, directed mainly at the 9 million or so taxpayers who receive tax returns each year. This will start in June. An education programme for employers and accountants will also start in the summer.

I am also arranging for presentations to hon. Members.

### Inflation

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what level of capacity working in manufacturing industry he and the Governor of the Bank of England assess as likely to be inflationary. [21312]

**Mr. Nelson:** The level of spare capacity in the economy is one of the many factors that are taken into account in setting monetary policy.

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if it is Government policy to hold down the rate of inflation by raising interest rates and the exchange rate to prevent United Kingdom manufacturers from passing on increases in the cost of imported materials and components. [21590]

**Mr. Nelson:** The Government are committed to delivering permanently low inflation and has an explicit inflation objective. The aim is to keep underlying inflation as measured by the retail prices index excluding mortgage interest payments, in the range 1 to 4 per cent. and to bring it down into the lower half of this range by the end of the present Parliament. Interest rates have been, and will continue to be, set to deliver this objective.

### Manufacturing

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he is taking to raise the profitability of United Kingdom manufacturing. [21586]

**Mr. Nelson:** The Government are committed to helping British manufacturing compete, at home and in the world markets. The Government's role is to set a framework in which business can flourish, from low inflation and sound finances to supply-side reform. Latest figures available show profitability for United Kingdom manufacturing companies, net rate of return, was up from 4.5 per cent. in 1992 to 5.8 per cent. in 1993.

### Exports

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if it is the Government's objective to promote export-led growth by raising the rate of return for manufacturing above the rate of other non-North sea industrial and commercial companies. [21589]

**Mr. Nelson:** The key to maintaining good export performance is for the Government to deliver permanently low inflation and companies to keep costs under control, thereby ensuring that British industry remains competitive.

### Living Standards

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on the standard of living of manual workers in manufacturing relative to the white collar workers in the private sector. [21588]

**Mr. Aitken:** The Government's policy is to create the economic conditions that will permit improvements in living standards for all groups in society.

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

### Equal Opportunities

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made within his Department on equal opportunities matters. [21522]

**Mr. Goodlad:** The FCO, including ODA, is committed to equal opportunities. We have a number of programmes for action on women and race and are finalising programmes for the disabled. We are active members of Opportunity 2000.

A number of initiatives to increase the recruitment of women and to help them fulfil their potential are set out in the 1995 departmental report, copies of which have been placed in the House Libraries. The number of female ambassadors has risen to six since the report was issued.

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress he hopes to achieve in his Department over the next three months to push forward the declaration signed in October 1994 at the Vienna conference in preparation for the fourth UN conference on women; and if he will incorporate a section on equal opportunities in his Department's annual report. [21524]

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** We are committed to the principles set out in the regional platform for action agreed at the preparatory conference in Vienna for the fourth world conference on women. We have taken these forward through a wide range of programmes and initiatives and will continue to do so.

Equal Opportunities issues are included in the 1995 departmental report.

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish the gender assessment being prepared by his Department. [21523]

**Mr. Goodlad:** FCO policy, in line with guidance issued in 1992 by the ministerial group on women's issues, is that policy proposals should ensure that unlawful or unjustifiable sex or race discrimination does not occur and that similar principles apply to people with disabilities, older people or ex-offenders. This scrutiny is part of a continuous and routine process, as part of policy advice to Ministers.

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which Minister in his Department has responsibility for equal opportunities issues. [21521]

**Mr. Goodlad:** My right hon. and noble Friend Baroness Chalker of Wallasey and I have responsibility for equal opportunities issues in the Overseas Development Administration and the diplomatic wing of the FCO respectively.

**Mrs. Anne Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will name the leader and members of the United Kingdom delegation to the UN international conference on women in Beijing. [21602]

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Aylesbury by my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of Employment, on 16 March 1995, *Official Report,* column *648.*

### Immigration

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the United Kingdom post in Delhi has been informed by appellate authorities in London if the appeal by Mrs. Kuldip Kaur against refusal to allow her to enter the United Kingdom to join her husband may proceed; if the post has prepared an explanatory statement concerning Mrs. Kaur's application (REF: IMM/ECR/0152/94); and if he will make a statement. [21731]

**Mr. Baldry:** The entry clearance officer has asked the immigration appellate authority for directions as to whether or not the appeal should proceed. As at 27 April these had not been received. As and when they are, an explanatory statement will be drawn up and sent to the IAA.

### Nuclear Weapons

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of Sate for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy in respect of the proposal of the President of the Russian Federation for the international community to agree by the year 2000 on a target date for the elimination of all nuclear weapons. [21349]

**Mr. David Davis:** We believe that progress in nuclear disarmament is best achieved through international negotiations. We do not think that it is useful or sensible to impose deadlines on these efforts.

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions Her Majesty's Government has had with the Government of the Russian Federation concerning the proposal of the Government of the Russian Federation for the five nuclear weapon states to negotiate a treaty on nuclear stability and security; and if he will make a statement on the Government's understanding and assessment of this proposal. [21348]

**Mr. David Davis:** We have not had substantive discussions with the Government of the Russian Federation on this subject. So far as we know, the Russian ideas are still at an early stage of development.

**Mr. Paul Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government regarding the entitlement of non-governmental organisations to act as observers to the non-proliferation treaty review and extension conference *(a)* during its plenary sessions and *(b)* during the deliberations of its main committee. [21346]

**Mr. David Davis:** We welcome the decision taken by the non-proliferation treaty review and extension conference that non-governmental organisations should be given access to the plenary sessions of the conference and to debates in the main committees of the conference.

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the United Kingdom ceased production of fissile materials for nuclear explosive purposes. [21354]

**Mr. David Davis:** During his address to the non-proliferation review and extension conference on 18 April, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs announced that the United Kingdom had ceased the production of fissile materials for explosive purposes. It is not our practice to disclose details of past production.

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the response to Her Majesty's Government to the proposal made by the Government of South Africa at the non-proliferation treaty review and extension conference on 19 April for the adoption by states parties of a set of principles for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. [21342]

**Mr. David Davis:** We have told the South African Government that we wish to give careful consideration to their proposal for a set of principles for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on the adoption by states parties to the non-proliferation treaty, during the treaty's review and extension conference, of a time-bound framework for achieving all the objectives of the non-proliferation treaty. [21350]

**Mr. David Davis:** The many and diverse objectives of the treaty cannot be achieved simply by imposing a time limit on them.

**Mr. Paul Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals Her Majesty's Government have put forward at the non-proliferation treaty review and extension conference for strengthening the treaty's review procedure. [21338]

**Mr. David Davis:** Discussion of possible improvements to the treaty's review procedures are only now beginning in New York. We will participate fully in these. We believe that regular review conferences should continue to be held at five yearly intervals in accordance with the relevant article of the treaty.

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government supports the creation of a grievance procedure for the non-proliferation treaty; if the Government have responded to such proposals at the non-proliferation treaty review and extension conference; and if he will make a statement. [21344]

**Mr. David Davis:** We believe that the treaty's review procedures provide ample opportunity for states parties to voice their concerns about the implementation of the treaty.

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on an adoption of states parties to the non-proliferation treaty, during the treaty's review and extension conference, of a time-bound framework for achieving complete nuclear disarmament. [21352]

**Mr. David Davis:** We believe that progress in nuclear disarmament is best achieved through international negotiations. We do not think that it is useful or sensible to impose deadlines on these efforts.

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals Her Majesty's Government have put forward at the non-proliferation treaty review and extension conference *(a)* for furthering the objectives of article VI of the treaty and *(b)* for monitoring and reviewing progress made under article VI of the treaty. [21340]

**Mr. David Davis:** We have, either before the non-proliferation treaty conference or at the conference itself:

—issued revised positive and negative security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon states parties to the treaty;

—announced that the UK has ceased production of fissile material for explosive purposes; we have also contributed to efforts to achieve early negotiations on a multilateral treaty ending the production of such material;

—announced further reductions in British nuclear weapon systems;

—indicated the circumstances in which the UK would be willing to enter multilateral negotiations on the global reduction of nuclear weapons.

We believe that five-yearly review conferences, held in accordance with the relevant article of the treaty, provide the appropriate means for monitoring progress under article VI of the treaty.

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the response of her Majesty's Government to proposals made at the non-proliferation treaty review and extension conference for the decision on extending the treaty to be made by secret ballot. [21347]

**Mr. David Davis:** We have opposed such proposals. The NPT is a major international security treaty. Its extension is of great importance. We believe it is appropriate, therefore, that the position taken by individual states parties on that decision should be known to all. Accordingly, we believe the decision should be taken by an open rather than a secret ballot.

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government support the creation of a standing consultative committee for the non-proliferation treaty; if the Government have responded to such proposals at the non-proliferation treaty review and extension conference; and if he will make a statement. [21343]

**Mr. David Davis:** We see no need for a standing consultative committee. We believe that the existing review procedures provide ample opportunity for states parties to voice their concerns about the implementation of the treaty.

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on the adoption by states parties to the non-proliferation treaty, during the treaty's review and extension conference, of a programme of action for achieving all the objectives of the non-proliferation treaty. [21351]

**Mr. David Davis:** We believe that at the non-proliferation treaty review and extension conference the states parties to the treaty should reaffirm their commitment to the achievement of the objectives of the treaty.

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals Her Majesty's Government have put forward at the non-proliferation treaty review and extension conference *(a)* for furthering the objectives of article IV of the treaty and *(b)* for monitoring and reviewing progress made under article IV of the treaty. [21339]

**Mr. David Davis:** The UK supports article IV of the non-proliferation treaty. The British delegation to the NPT review and extension conference is currently taking an active part in the review of article IV in the main committee dealing with peaceful uses.

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the response of Her Majesty's Government to the proposal made by the Government of Germany at the non-proliferation treaty review and extension conference on 18 April for a ban on re-using nuclear weapons materials in the production of other nuclear weapons. [21345]

**Mr. David Davis:** We believe that re-cycling fissile material allows us to keep our stockpile of fissile material at the minimum level necessary to meet our operational requirements.

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the response of Her Majesty's Government to proposals made by the Government of South Africa at the non-proliferation treaty review and extension conference on 19 April for strengthening the treaty's review procedure. [21341]

**Mr. David Davis:** We believe that the treaty's review procedures provide ample opportunity for states parties to voice their concerns about the implementation of the treaty. But we are prepared to give consideration to the South African proposals.

### Market Testing

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, if he will estimate the cost of employing consultants in connection with market testing programmes in which his Department has been engaged since their inception. [21368]

**Mr. Goodlad:** Between 1 January 1992 and 31 March 1995, the cost to the FCO, including the Overseas Development Administration, of consultancy related to market testing was £742,700.

### Hospitality

**Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much was spent on official hospitality by his Department in 1994–95. [21214]

**Mr. Goodlad:** A total of £7,680,934 was spent on official hospitality by the FCO and ODA in the financial year 1994–95. The Natural Resources Institute, an agency of the ODA, spent £3,386 and Wilton Park, an agency of the FCO, spent £455.

### Zimbabwe

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans his Department has for establishment of a regional peacekeeping training centre in Zimbabwe; and if he will make a statement. [21335]

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** We understand that the Government of Zimbabwe may make facilities at its staff college available to the UN as a regional centre for the development of peacekeeping skills. This proposal fits into the framework of the British initiative on conflict resolution and peacekeeping in Africa, launched at the UN General Assembly in September 1994, and was developed

at a workshop co-hosted by ourselves and Zimbabwe in Harare in January this year. We would welcome such an offer being made to the UN and would be happy to consider a possible training contribution.

### Civil Servants

**Mr. Ainger:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many civil service appointments were made to administrative assistant and administrative officer posts in his Department and the agencies for which he is accountable in each quarter from September 1993 until April 1995. [21768]

**Mr. Goodlad:** My Department and its agencies have made the following number of permanent and pensionable administrative assistant and administrative officer appointments during the period September 1993 to April 1995:

| | *Department* | *Agencies* |
|---|---|---|
| *Administrative Assistant* | | |
| September—December 1993 | 0 | 0 |
| January—March 1994 | 0 | 0 |
| April—June 1994 | 6 | 0 |
| July—September 1994 | 8 | 0 |
| October—December 1994 | 4 | 0 |
| January—April 1995 | 15 | 0 |
| *Administrative Officer* | | |
| September—December 1993 | 7 | 0 |
| January—March 1994 | 3 | 1 |
| April—June 1994 | 43 | 0 |
| July—September 1994 | 28 | 0 |
| October—December 1994 | 10 | 1 |
| January—April 1995 | 28 | 0 |

### Anzac Day

**Mr. Corbett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs by whom he was represented at the Anzac day commemoration at the Cenotaph, London, on 25 April. [21799]

**Mr. Baldry:** In keeping with tradition, wreaths were laid at the Cenotaph on 25 April to commemorate Anzac day on behalf of the British Government and people by representatives of the British armed forces.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

### Inward Investment

**Ms Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many new companies from outside Northern Ireland have invested in Northern Ireland since 1989; and if he will list them. [19862]

**Mr. Ancram:** The Industrial Development Board is aware of 35 new manufacturing and tradeable services companies from outside Northern Ireland which, between 1 January 1989 and 31 December 1994, confirmed their intention to make first-time investments there. These are listed as follows:

*Inward investment by manufacturing and tradeable services companies new to Northern Ireland 1 January 1989 to 31 December 1994*

| *Country of origin* | *Company* |
|---|---|
| France | Delwyn Enterprises Ltd |
| Germany | Hueco Lightronic NI Ltd |
| | MPK (United Kingdom) Ltd |
| Great Britain | MSS International Ltd |
| | Avery Dennison Ltd |
| | Audio Processing Technology Ltd |
| | Fugitsi Fulcrum (Ireland) Ltd |
| | McKechnie (UK) Ltd |
| | CFM Group Ltd |
| | AVM Telecom Ltd |
| | Transtec Foundries Ltd |
| | Allen Industrial Ltd |
| | Training and Business Group (Overseas) Ltd |
| Hong Kong | Benelux Manufacturing (NI) Ltd |
| Indonesia | Norfil |
| | Pan European Textiles Ltd |
| Japan | Ryobi Aluminium Casting (UK) Ltd |
| Republic of Ireland | GC McKeown & Co (NI) Ltd |
| | Webtech (NI) Ltd |
| | Polystar (Ireland) Ltd |
| | Charles Bell (1963) Ltd |
| | Vision Information Consulting Ltd |
| South Korea | Deasung Circuits Ltd |
| | CCA Electronic Ltd |
| | Daewoo Electronics UK Ltd |
| | Daewha Metal (UK) Ltd |
| Taiwan | CIS Data Ltd |
| | Textonnia Ltd |
| USA | DDL Electronics Ltd |
| | Fruit of the Loom Manufacturing Co Ltd |
| | Harris Laboratories Ltd |
| | Seagate Technology (Ireland) |
| | BCO Technologies (NI) Ltd |
| | Valence Technology BV10 |
| | ABC Laboratories (Europe) Ltd |

### Fair Employment Commission

**Mr. McGrady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what firms have failed to submit annual monitoring returns with the Fair Employment Commission; and what fines were issued as a result of such breaches since the implementation of the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1989. [19857]

**Mr. Ancram:** A total of 95 concerns have been prosecuted for failure to submit annual monitoring returns to the Fair Employment Commission. These concerns, and the penalties imposed on them by magistrates courts are as follows:

| Company | Penalty |
|---|---|
| Otis Elevators | Absolute Discharge |
| Norman Gordon | Absolute Discharge |
| P and M Kernan | Absolute Discharge |
| Alex Hamilton | Absolute Discharge |
| Anglo Beef Processors | Absolute Discharge |
| Allingham Transport | Absolute Discharge |
| Universal Cleaning Supplies | Absolute Discharge |
| R. Hogg | Absolute Discharge |
| Lowell and Christmas | Absolute Discharge |
| Terra Travel | Absolute Discharge |
| Ronald James Ross T/A Ross Motors | Absolute Discharge |
| Ivan Lapsely T/A Limavady Autopoint | Absolute Discharge |
| C and R Furniture Ltd. | Absolute Discharge |
| Thomas Carville Ltd. T/A Eagle Fish Co. | Absolute Discharge |
| Eagle Seafoods Ltd. | Absolute Discharge |
| Joseph Leonard | Absolute Discharge |
| Maloneys Restaurant | Absolute Discharge |
| Hugh Neill | Absolute Discharge |
| Outlet Recording Co. Ltd. | Absolute Discharge |
| S and E Quality Wood Products Ltd. | Absolute Discharge |
| Paul Thompson | Absolute Discharge |
| Woodburn Engineering | Absolute Discharge |
| Salmon Leap | £10 |
| Galeton Ltd. T/A The Craig Clinic | £10 |
| Knockdene Garages Ltd. | £10 |
| Garmoyle Enterprises Ltd. T/A The Body Shop | £10 |
| A Van Laere T/A Comber Catering | £20 |
| David Wilson | £25 |
| Tracey Kitchens | £25 |
| Charles Corr | £25 |
| Denninson Storage | £25 |
| Dromore Properties | £25 |
| Raymond Turkington Decorators | £25 |
| Lochside Garages | £25 |
| Logans Coach Hire | £25 |
| Ronald Conway T/A Conway Flood and Todd | £25 |
| JCP Securite (UK) Ltd. | £25 |
| Railway Hotel (Enniskillen) Ltd. | £25 |
| Ulster Travel Ltd. | £25 |
| Stanley Armstrong T/A Causeway Hotel | £25 |
| Armourguard Security Ltd. | £25 |
| WP Trussworld Ltd. | £25 |
| McGrath Bros Engineering | £25 |
| T. Girvan | £25 |
| Terence Kennedy T/A W. R. K. nedy and Co. | £25 |
| Jean McCann T/A Hair Traffic | £25 |
| Cootes Concrete | £50 |
| Brian Jardine | £50 |
| Seaforde Transport | £50 |
| Square One Fashions | £50 |
| Adamsez Ltd. | £50 |
| Liam Wilson | £50 |
| Moyala Glazing | £50 |
| Business and Scientific Services | £50 |
| Strings Restaurant | £50 |
| B. Devine | £50 |
| Joseph Hughes | £50 |
| Francis McMillen T/A Connor Freight | £50 |
| Wilsons of Rathkenny | £50 |
| Allgo Engineering Ltd. | £50 |
| Waveline Ltd. | £50 |
| Trasna Investments Ltd. T/A Devenish Arms | £50 |
| Gibson Brothers Ltd | £50 |
| Universal Meat Co. | £50 |
| Wellington Park Hotel | £50 |
| Greenan Inns Ltd. | £50 |
| Crawsfordsburn Inn Ltd. | £50 |
| David Hall | £450 |
| Limavady Autopoint | £75 |
| Acheson and Son (Derry) Ltd. | £75 |
| Paul Lightbody T/A Glenville Nursing Home | £75 |
| Diana Gass | £75 |
| James Derry | £75 |
| Joseph Leonard | £100 |
| S. J. Williamson | £100 |
| Waveline Ltd. | £100 |
| R.R. Tohani | £100 |
| Audio Times | £100 |
| Tensator Ltd. | £100 |
| Knockna Moe Hotel | £100 |
| Aircraft Furnishings Ltd. | £100 |
| Fortfield Motors Ltd. | £100 |
| Cootes Concrete Products | £100 |
| Barrett Electrical Contracts Ltd. | £100 |
| Roulston and McLoughlin | £100 |
| ATS (Northern Ireland) Ltd. | £100 |
| Sands and Toner Newry Ltd. | £100 |
| Motorway Tyres and Accessories Ltd. | £100 |
| Prestige Pubs Ltd. | £100 |
| Laser Electrical Ltd. | £100 |
| Robert Wilson | £100 |
| Dunellen Ltd. | £125 |
| Turven Construction Ltd. | £150 |
| McParland and Gordon Ltd. | £150 |
| United Wine Merchants Ltd. | £400 |

### Housing Policy

**Mr. McGrady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the present stage of the housing policy review process; when the consultation White Paper will be published; and what will be the duration of the consultation process. [20648]

**Mr. Moss:** The housing policy review is in its final stages and a consultation paper is expected to be published by the end of June. Following publication, a consultation period of some three months is envisaged.

### Child Prostitution

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many cases of child prostitution have been reported during the last year; and what were the comparable figures for each of the previous four years. [20707]

**Sir John Wheeler:** The figures requested are not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

### Prisons

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the current prison population; and what were the figures for each of the previous four years. [20711]

**Sir John Wheeler:** Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Northern Ireland Prison Service under its chief executive, Mr. Alan Shannon. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

*Letter from A. D. Shannon to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 27 April 1995:*

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has asked me to reply to your Parliamentary Question about the current prison population in Northern Ireland and the figures for each of the previous four years.

*Current Population*

There are currently 1761 people in prison in Northern Ireland.

*Population over previous four years.*

1991: 1788

1992: 1810

1993: 1934

1994: 1921 [subject to validation]

The figures for previous years are the Average Daily Population as published in the Northern Ireland Prison Service Annual Report.

I hope this information is helpful.

### Illiteracy

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the current reported rate of illiteracy and what were the figures for each of the previous four years. [20709]

**Mr. Ancram:** Information is not routinely collected on illiteracy rates in Northern Ireland. However, the position is considered to be similar to England and Wales where the Basic Skills Agency estimates that one in six adults is unable to read, write and/or speak in English at a level necessary to function and progress at work and in society in general. There is no evidence that this proportion has changed significantly in recent years.

### Animal Diseases

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many cases of Teschen disease occurred in each year since 1975. [21096]

**Mr. Ancram:** None.

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many cases of African Swine Fever there have been each year since 1985. [21065]

**Mr. Ancram:** None

### Market Testing

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will estimate the cost of employing consultants in connection with market testing programmes in which his Department has been engaged since their inception. [21374]

**Sir John Wheeler:** The information sought was published in table 4 of the market testing bulletin special report published on 9 January 1995. This covered the competing for quality programme for the period April 1992 to September 1994. The figures for the Northern Ireland Civil Service (including the Northern Ireland Office) are:

| | *£000* |
|---|---|
| External consultancy support to in-house bids | 137.2 |
| External consultancy support to Departments | 554.8 |

An up-date of the costs incurred in the period 1 October 1994 to 31 March 1995 is currently being compiled and this will be included in the overall figures in the citizens charter 1995 report.

### Mink Farms

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the number of licensed mink farms in each year since 1989. [21191]

**Mr. Ancram:** There has only ever been one licensed mink farm in Northern Ireland which operated from 1976 to 1991. There are no licensed mink farms in Northern Ireland at present.

### NHS Trust Boards

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish an up-to-date list of all the chairs and non-executive directors of each NHS trust board, indicating the gender and occupation of each individual. [21355]

**Mr. Moss:** The information requested in respect of the 14 health and social services trusts in operation in Northern Ireland is available in the Library.

### Health Authorities

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish an up-to-date list by region of all the chairs and non-executive member of each health authority, indicating the gender and occupation of each individual. [21361]

**Mr. Moss:** The information requested is given in the table.

| | *Gender* | *Occupation* |
|---|---|---|
| *Eastern health and social services board* | | |
| Chairman: | Mr. J. Daniel Thompson | Solicitor |
| Non-executive members: | Mr. Daniel J. McGuinness | Solicitor |
| | Mr. James C. Morton | Accountant |
| | Mrs. Gwen Savage | Managing Director |
| | Professor Robert J. Stout | Medical Consultant |
| *Northern health and social services board* | | |
| Chairman: | Mr. Robert J. Hanna | Farmer |
| Non-executive members: | Mr. Michael A. O'Connor | Director |
| | Mrs. Nuala P. O'Logan | Lecturer |
| | Mrs. Ailna V. Smyth | Housewife |
| *Southern health and social services board* | | |
| Chairman: | Mr. William F. Gillespie | Managing Director |
| Non-executive members: | Mrs. Geraldine Donaghy | Director |
| | Mrs. M. K. Philomena Hagan | Manager |
| | Mrs. Jennifer Power | Voluntary Worker |
| | Mr. C. A. J. Quinn | Accountant |
| | Mr. D. J. Ryan | Small business proprietor |
| *Western health and social services board* | | |
| Chairman: | Mr. Robert G. Toland | Director |
| Non-executive members: | Mrs. Margaret R. Cooper | Solicitor |
| | Mr. Anthony Jackson | Accountant |
| | Mr. Patrick J. Kelly | Farmer |
| | Mrs. Anne F. Mark | Housewife |

### Protected Birds

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many permits have been issued to falconers to take protected species of birds as quarry in each year since 1988; what were the species in respect of which such permits were issued; and what were the number of each species taken. [21248]

**Mr. Moss:** No permits have been either applied for or issued to falconers to take protected species of birds as quarry in any year since 1988.

### Birds of Prey

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many licences have been issued in each year since 1988 to possess birds of prey; and what were the numbers of birds of each species held under such licences. [21250]

**Mr. Moss:** The number of licences issued in each year since 1988 to possess birds of prey and the number and species held under such licences are set out in the table.

| | | *Numbers and species held* | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Year* | *Number of Licences issued* | *Peregrine* | *Sparrowhawk* | *Kestrel* | *Buzzard* | *Others* |
| 1988 | 9 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 2 | — |
| 1989 | 2 | — | — | — | 1 | 1 Goshawk |
| 1990 | 6 | 5 | — | — | 3 | — |
| 1991 | 7 | 5 | — | 2 | 3 | 1 Merlin |
| 1992 | 12 | 5 | — | — | 4 | 3 Barn Owls |
| 1993 | 13 | 5 | — | 8 | — | — |
| 1994 | 22 | 4 | 3 | 7 | 3 | 5 Goshawk |

### NHS Cost Improvement Programme

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the total annual cost improvement programme in the national health service provider units in each of the last four years. [21333]

**Mr. Moss:** The total annual cash releasing cost improvement programme for the health and personal social services for each of the last four years is as follows:

| | *Outturn £ million* |
|---|---|
| 1991–92 | 10.8 |
| 1992–93 | 15.8 |
| 1993–94 | 16.7 |
| 1994–95 | 18.0 |

### Education Research Projects

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much money has been devoted to funding education research projects by his Department in each of the last five years; and what percentage of education spending this represents. [21557]

**Mr. Ancram:** The information is as follows:

| *Year* | *Amount* | *Percentage of total Deni expenditure* |
|---|---|---|
| 1990–91 | 214,000 | 0.023 |
| 1991–92 | 158,000 | 0.014 |
| 1992–93 | 185,000 | 0.015 |
| 1993–94 | 250,000 | 0.020 |
| 1994–95 | 283,000 | 0.022 |

### Crime Statistics

**Mr. Peter Robinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many *(a)* republican and *(b)* loyalists in Northern Ireland have been (i) arrested, (ii) questioned, (iii) charged and (iv) convicted in each of the past eight months. [21560]

**Sir John Wheeler:** The number of persons arrested and charged in connection with terrorist-related offences from 1 August 1994 to 31 March 1995 is as follows:

| *Month* | *Republican* | *Loyalist* |
|---|---|---|
| *Arrested* | | |
| August | 82 | 71 |
| September | 23 | 38 |
| October | 22 | 43 |
| November | 20 | 52 |
| December | 20 | 27 |
| January | 9 | 26 |
| February | 36 | 16 |
| March | 12 | 38 |
| Totals | 224 | 311 |
| *Charged* | | |
| August | 15 | 15 |
| September | 1 | 15 |
| October | 4 | 14 |
| November | 6 | 8 |
| December | 4 | 6 |
| January | 0 | 8 |
| February | 16 | 4 |
| March | 1 | 3 |
| Totals | 47 | 73 |

There are no figures available regarding the number of people questioned during this period.

The number of persons convicted of scheduled offences from 1 August 1994 to 31 March 1995 was:

| *Month* | *No of persons convicted* |
|---|---|
| August | 13 |
| September | 10 |
| October | 29 |
| November | 18 |

| Month | No of persons convicted[1] |
|---|---|
| December | 64 |
| January | 49 |
| February | 66 |
| March | 51 |

[1] A republican/loyalist breakdown is not available for persons convicted.

### Civil Servants

**Mr. Ainger:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many civil service appointments were made to administrative assistant and administrative officer posts in his Department and the agencies for which he is accountable in each quarter from September 1993 until April 1995. [21762]

**Sir John Wheeler:** The number of civil service appointments made to permanent administrative assistant and administrative officer posts in the Northern Ireland Department and the Northern Ireland Office in each quarter from September 1993 to April 1995 were as follows:

| | Administrative assistant | Administrative officer |
|---|---|---|
| September to December 1993 (4 months) | 25 | 46 |
| January to March 1994 | 18 | 30 |
| April to June 1994 | 34 | 35 |
| July to September 1994 | 34 | 54 |
| October to December 1994 | 27 | 27 |
| January to March 1995 | 27 | 39 |

### Divorce Cases

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many cases of divorce have been reported during the last year; and what were the figures for each of the previous four years. [20710]

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** I have been asked to reply.

The number of decrees nisi granted in respect of divorces in Northern Ireland were as follows:

1990: 2,015
1991: 2,367
1992: 2,411
1993: 2,392
1994: 2,538

## OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

### Namibia University

**Sir David Steel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the Overseas Development Administration will provide sponsorship to the University of Namibia Foundation. [21125]

**Mr. Baldry:** We have no plans to provide sponsorship to the University of Namibia Foundation. We are currently providing assistance direct to the university through the provision of books, and support for the post of pro-vice chancellor.

## TRANSPORT

### Livestock Hauliers

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what support the Government are giving to livestock hauliers to ensure that they can continue their trade. [20917]

**Mr. Norris:** Generally my Department's support for livestock hauliers in the United Kingdom and abroad is the same as it is for other hauliers, and covers a wide range of matters. My Department has been in touch with ports involved in recent action on the export of live animals, and will remain so, but intervention is for the police and the courts.

### Road Fuels

**Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has made of the volume of road fuels consumed in the year 2000; what he expects this figure to be if the duties on road fuels were adjusted solely in line with the retail prices index; and if he will make a statement. [20918]

**Mr. Norris:** The Government's latest projections of future energy demand for the whole economy to the year 2020 were recently published in energy paper 65 "Energy Projections for the UK", as announced by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Industry and Energy on 8 March 1995. From this, the demand for road fuels is expected to be in the range of 39 to 41 million tonnes in 2000, which takes account of the effect of the Government's strategy of increases in the duties on road fuels of at least 5 per cent. a year on average above the rate of inflation. If fuel duty increases were kept in line with the rate of inflation, demand in 2000 would be between 42 and 44 million tonnes.

### Market Testing

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will estimate the cost of employing consultants in connection with market testing programmes in which his Department has been engaged since their inception. [21378]

**Mr. Norris:** Payments to consultants for work on the Department's "Competing for Quality" programme since its inception total £2.197 million.

### Hospitality

**Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much was spent on official hospitality by his Department in 1994–95. [21201]

**Mr. Norris:** The Department of Transport's expenditure on official hospitality during 1994–95 was as follows:

| | £ |
|---|---|
| Central Transport Group (CTG) | 127,062 |
| Agencies | 90,788 |

### European Social Fund

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list those public projects which received European social fund support and were subsequently privatised over the last 10 years, indicating *(a)* the level of funding and *(b)* the dates when it was received. [21290]

(2) if he will list those projects in privatised companies which have received European social fund support since privatisation indicating *(a)* the level of funding and *(b)* the dates when it was received. [21291]

**Mr. Norris:** None of the privatised transport companies has applied directly and received European social fund support since 1990. Information for the years before 1990 could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those British Rail projects which received European social fund support over the last 10 years, indicating *(a)* the level of funding and *(b)* the dates when it was received. [21300]

**Mr. Watts:** Since 1990 no British Rail projects have received European social fund support. Data for the years before 1990 could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

### Civil Service Appointments

**Mr. Ainger:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many civil service appointments were made to administrative assistant and administrative officer posts in his Department and the agencies for which he is accountable in each quarter from September 1993 until April 1995. [21775]

**Mr. Norris:** The Department's personal information system records the permanent appointments to administrative assistant and administrative officer as shown in the following table:

| *Starting period* | *Administrative assistant* | *Administrative officer* |
|---|---|---|
| September 1993—November 1993 | 19 | 29 |
| December 1994—February 1994 | 29 | 21 |
| March 1994—May 1994 | 18 | 19 |
| June 1994—August 1994 | 30 | 10 |
| September 1994—November 1994 | 19 | 10 |
| December 1994—February 1994 | 7 | 9 |
| March 1995—April 1995 | 9 | 9 |
| Totals for September 1993—April 1995 | 131 | 107 |

### Bull Bars

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what motor vehicle companies have changed their advertising and promotion of bull bars following his advice that bull bars should not be illustrated in promotions. [22046]

**Mr. Norris:** The information requested is not available.

### Railways

**Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the closing date for companies wishing to pre-qualify for bidding to buy British Railway's ROSCOs; how many companies have sought to pre-qualify for each of the three ROSCOs; and which companies these are. [21935]

**Mr. Watts:** Midnight on 21 April 1995, by which time strong interest had been shown by financial institutions, leasing companies and manufacturers in the United Kingdom and in eight other countries. Prospective purchasers will not be asked to identify their preferences for each of the three ROSCOs until later in the sale process. The identity of bidders is commercially sensitive.

### Port of Liverpool

**Sir Mark Lennox-Boyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what financial support the Port of Liverpool and the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company has received from *(a)* the European Community and *(b)* his Department in each financial year since 1990; and what he estimates the company will receive from the European Community and his Department in the next financial year. [21199]

**Mr. Norris:** The Port of Liverpool and the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company have received no direct financial support from my Department since 1990 and there are no plans for any such support in the next financial year.

Support from the European Community in the form of European regional development fund has been as follows:

*£(000)*

| | *1990–91* | *1991—92* | *1992–93* | *1993–94* | *1994–95* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Port of Liverpool | nil | 143 | 12 | 18 | 1 |
| Mersey Docks and Harbour Company | nil | 240 | 1,229 | 736 | 960 |

### Pollution

**Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what powers he has to control the level or speed of road traffic on occasions when pollution levels exceed proposed air quality standards; [21227]

(2) what studies he has carried out of the potential for reducing traffic levels in the event that *(a)* $NO_2$ levels in London exceed the World Health Organisation's 24 hour $NO_2$ health guideline and *(b)* $O_3$ levels in southern England exceed the World Health Organisation's 8 hour $O_3$ health guideline; [21236]

(3) what contingency plans he has drawn up to reduce traffic levels in the event that *(a)* $NO_2$ levels in London exceed the World Health Organisation's 24 hour $NO_2$ health guideline and *(b)* $O_3$ levels in Southern England exceed the World Health Organisation's 8 hour $O_3$ health guidelines; [21237]

(4) what consideration he has given to using his powers under section 14 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 to reduced speed limits on trunk roads to reduce emissions in the event that pollution levels exceed proposed air quality standards; and if he will make a statement. [21235]

**Mr. Norris:** A reduction in vehicle speed has differing effects on emissions of different pollutants. Any decision to impose speed limits would have to take into account levels of the pollutants of most concern.

Studies have indicated that traffic reduction may have the positive effect of reducing nitrogen dioxide

concentrations during winter smog episodes. However, this may have to be balanced against possible negative effects on emissions caused by congestion if traffic reduction measures involve road closures.

The Secretary of State has powers to regulate traffic only on trunk roads and motorways; traffic regulation on local roads, which comprise the vast majority of all roads, is the responsibility of local traffic authorities.

Any traffic restrictions to reduce air pollution must be developed at a local level so that all the implications can be considered—centralised contingency plans are impracticable. However, the complexity of the issue does merit further research and the Department is currently carrying out a review of existing research on how traffic management can influence air quality, with a view to undertaking a research project of our own later this year.

### Expenditure

**Mr. Meacher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the total expenditure on transport as a percentage of GNP for *(a)* each EU country, *(b)* the United States of America, *(c)* Japan and *(d)* each Scandinavian country.

**Dr. Mawhinney:** This information is not available.

### Pedestrian Casualty Report

**Mrs. Golding:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he will make available to hon. Members the report of the Transport research laboratory on pedestrian casualty rates. [21663]

**Mr Norris:** Pedestrian casualty rates are published annually in "Road Accidents Great Britain" and updated quarterly in each current year. In addition TRL reports have been published on studies of particular aspects of risk including risk at pedestrian crossings. Copies are in the Library.

### Conflicts of Interest

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on how many occasions during the last five years *(a)* civil servants and *(b)* special advisers in his Department or its agencies have declared conflicts of interest; and how many instructions have been issued about their retention, disposal or management. [21399]

**Mr. Norris:** *(a)* In accordance with standard service wide rules the Department's "Staff Handbook" requires staff to declare any business or financial interests which they or immediate members of their families hold, which they would be able to further as a result of their official position. In the majority of cases conflicts of interest are reported to and resolved immediately by line management as the Department does not maintain a central record of all cases.

*(b)* One case of conflict of interests has been declared by a special adviser during the last five years.

### Trunk Roads

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to undertake the next general review of the trunk road network. [21828]

**Mr. Watts:** There are no current plans for a review.

## EDUCATION

### Academic Labour Market

**Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment she has made of the effects of United Kingdom academics moving abroad to attain higher salary levels on United Kingdom higher education salary levels. [20930]

**Mr. Boswell:** None. Data from the universities' statistical record show that the overall flows of academics to and from abroad are very small. In Great Britain in 1993, there was a net inflow of 220 full-time non-clinical university staff in former Universities Funding Council-funded institutions, the equivalent of 0.8 per cent. of staff in post. Such relatively small movements in the academic labour market would be unlikely to have an appreciable effect on higher education salary levels in the United Kingdom.

### Market Testing

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will estimate the cost of employing consultants in connection with market testing programmes in which her Department has been engaged since their inception. [21365]

**Mr. Forth:** The estimated cost of employing consultants in connection with market-testing programmes since their inception, September 1992, is £375,000.

### Conflicts of Interest

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education on how many occasions during the last five years *(a)* civil servants and *(b)* special advisers in her Department or its agencies have declared conflicts of interest; and how many instructions have been issued about their retention, disposal or management. [21395]

**Mr. Forth:** The Department's terms and conditions handbook requires staff to declare any potential conflicts of interest to their senior management so that appropriate action can be considered. The handbook is made available to all staff. Records of declarations of potential conflicts are not held centrally on civil servants. No cases involving special advisers have arisen in the last five years.

### Hospitality

**Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how much was spent on official hospitality by her Department in 1994–95. [21206]

**Mr. Forth:** Provisional outturn expenditure for 1994–95 on official hospitality is £75,000 for the Department and £1,000 for the Teachers' Pension Agency, giving a total of £76,000.

The cost of official hospitality is included in the running cost expenditure for the Department which is published every year in the departmental report. Official hospitality includes the costs of teas and coffees, buffet lunches and dinners.

### Civil Servants

**Mr. Ainger:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many civil service appointments were

made to administrative assistant and administrative officer posts in her Department and the agencies for which she is accountable in each quarter from September 1993 until April 1995. [21771]

**Mr. Boswell:** The Department for Education and the Teachers Pensions Agency have made the following appointments to the administrative assistant—AA—and administrative officer—AO—grades since September 1993:

| | *AA* | *AO* |
|---|---|---|
| September 1993—November 1993 | 13 | 3 |
| December 1993—February 1994 | 5 | 5 |
| March 1994—May 1994 | 15 | 5 |
| June 1994—August 1994 | 11 | 7 |
| September 1994—November 1994 | 4 | 1 |
| December 1994—February 1995 | 22 | 1 |
| March 1995—April 1995 | 13 | 1 |

### Research Projects

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how much has been spent on funding educational research projects by her Department in each of the last five years; and what percentage of education spending this represents. [21559]

**Mr. Forth:** The Department's expenditure from the research budget over the last five years is given in the table, and is also shown as a percentage of total departmental expenditure.

| | *Expenditure from research budget (£ million)* | *As percentage of the department's total expenditure* |
|---|---|---|
| 1990–91 | 2.38 | 0.04 |
| 1991–92 | 1.80 | 0.03 |
| 1992–93 | 1.74 | 0.02 |
| 1993–94 | 0.96 | 0.01 |
| 1994–95 | [1]0.67 | 0.01 |

[1] this includes the Department's contribution of £0.10 million to the Learning Credits consultancy and a grant of £0.04 million paid to the University of London Institute of Education.

Total departmental expenditure covers central Government expenditure and grants to local authorities within the Department of Education's programme.

### Sponsor Governors

**Mr. Byers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education which schools have appointed sponsor governors; and if she will state for each school which companies they represent and how much each company has donated to each school. [22066]

**Mr. Robin Squire:** All grant-maintained and voluntary aided schools which have been designated as technology colleges are required to amend their instrument of government so as to appoint between one and four sponsor governors to represent their sponsors. Some 67 technology colleges have been designated, 52 of which have so far requested the necessary amendments to their instrument. The table names the schools and the sponsors whom their sponsor governors represent. While all technology colleges are required to raise around £100,000 of sponsorship as a condition of designation, it would not be appropriate to publish the value of the sponsorship donated by each individual sponsor, since some sponsors may consider that to be confidential.

| *Name of school* | *Company represented by sponsor governor* |
|---|---|
| Aldersley High School Wolverhampton | Database/Apricot Computers, Summit Catering Services (Midlands) Ltd., Trustee Savings Bank Ltd. |
| All Hallows RC High School, Lancashire | British Aerospace Defence Ltd. |
| All Saints Catholic School, Dagenham | Exide Batteries, Devon House Interiors |
| Applemore Technology School, Hampshire | Vosper Thornycroft (UK) Ltd., International Speciality Chemicals Ltd., 2GL Computer Systems Ltd., Clifton Reed Consultants Ltd. |
| Bacup and Rawtenstall Grammar School, Lancashire | Greenwood and Coope Ltd., Dixons plc, Systems Integrated Research |
| Baines School, Lancashire | Grantham Graphic Technologies, GTi educational Systems Ltd. |
| Belper School, Derbyshire | Thorntons plc |
| Bexley-Erith Technical High School, Bexley | BETHS Parents Association |
| Bishop Stopford School, Northamptonshire | Research Machines |
| Central Technology College, Gloucestershire | Systems Integrated Research, Chartwells |
| Chalvedon School, Essex | Roy Millard Associates (Architects) Ltd., PMD Associates |
| Chatham Grammar School for Girls, Kent | Clifton Reed Consultants Ltd., GEC Avionics Ltd. |
| Collingwood College, Surrey | GTi Educational Systems Ltd., ORACLE Corporation UK Ltd., MOTOROLA Communications International Group |
| The Cornwallis School, Kent | ICL United Kingdom, Knauf UK Gmbh |
| Deacon's School, Cambridgeshire | Perkins Group, Apricot Computers, Greater Peterborough TEC, Thomas Cook Group |
| Deanery CE High School, Wigan | Latham Jenkins Ltd., Milliken Industrials Ltd., Metcom Integrated Services Ltd., Education Business Partnership |
| Denefield School, Berkshire | DHL International (UK) Ltd., Thames Water Utilities, The Database Ltd/Apricot Computers |

| *Name of school* | *Company represented by sponsor governor* |
|---|---|
| George Spencer School, Nottinghamshire | The Database (Nottingham) Ltd.,<br>Sir Harry Djanogly CBE |
| Glyn ADT Technology School, Surrey | ADT Group plc |
| Herschel Grammar School, Berkshire | Slough Estates plc,<br>The Database Ltd. |
| Highbury GM School, Wiltshire | GTi Educational Systems Ltd.,<br>Lascar Electronics Ltd.,<br>Woven Electronics,<br>Aircraft and Armament Evaluation Establishment |
| Hugh Christie School, Kent | ICL United Kingdom |
| John Kelly Boys Technology College, Brent | Bestway Cash and Carry Company,<br>Avanti Consultancy,<br>Unisys |
| John Kelly Girls Technology College, Brent | Bestway Cash and Carry Company,<br>Avanti Consultancy,<br>Unisys |
| Kemnal Technology College, Bromley | Sir Philip and Lady Harris Charitable Trust,<br>Ballast Nedam Construction Ltd.,<br>Architects Joint Partnership Ltd. |
| The Kings School, Lincolnshire | The Database (Nottingham) Ltd. |
| The Lancaster Royal Grammar School, Lancashire | Alan Dick Engineering,<br>Nuclear Electric plc |
| Lincoln School of Science and Technology, Lincolnshire | Jackson Shipley Ltd.,<br>Simons Construction Group |
| Lodge Park School, Northamptonshire | The DUBOIS plc,<br>The Database (Nottingham) Ltd.,<br>Gotch, Saunders and Surridge Selectronics |
| Lynn Grove GM High School, Norfolk | Miller Mitchell Partnership,<br>Syfer Technology Ltd, |
| Merrill Community School (GM), Derbyshire | British Rail Research,<br>Derby Evening Telegraph |
| Mill Hill County High School, Barnet | Chartwells |
| New Wellington School, Trafford | The Wolfson Foundation,<br>Playlight Hire Ltd.,<br>Hopewiser Ltd.,<br>Research Machines |
| North Cumbria Technology College, Cumbria | Cavaghan Grey.,<br>Carnaud Metal Box,<br>Marks and Spencer |
| Northampton School for Boys, Northamptonshire | Northampton Old Grammar School Foundation |
| Philip Morant School, Essex | The Midland Bank plc,<br>J Sainsbury plc,<br>Woods of Colchester Ltd. |
| Rastrick High School, Calderdale | Denford Machine Tools Ltd.,<br>Dixon Stores Group |
| Ravens Wood School for Boys, Bromley | ICL,<br>Nynex plc,<br>The Wellcome Foundation |
| Saffron Walden County High School, Essex | The Saffron Walden Herts and Essex Building Society |
| Sale Moor School, Trafford | Alliance Family Foundation |
| Sawtry Community College, Cambridgeshire | Crossfield Electronics Ltd.,<br>The Database (Nottingham) Ltd. |
| Senacre Technology College, Kent | Russell and Brand Ltd. |
| Small Heath School, Birmingham | GTi Electronics Group plc,<br>Leyland Daf Vans,<br>Mercury Communications Ltd., |
| Soham Village College, Cambridgeshire | Marshall Motor Group Ltd. |
| St. Aidan's Church of England School, Lancashire | British Aerospace Defence Ltd.,<br>Canatxx Energy Ventures |
| St. Alban's Catholic High School, Suffolk | Clifton Reed Consultants Ltd. |
| St. Angela's Ursuline Convent School, Newham | Acatos and Hutchenson plc |
| St. George's College of Technology, Lincolnshire | The Database (Nottingham) Ltd.,<br>Tandberg UK,<br>Mr. Brealey |
| St. John's RC Comprehensive School, Durham | Ebac Ltd. |
| St. Peter's Collegiate School, Wolverhampton | Lucas Aerospace Ltd.,<br>Research Machines Ltd. |
| St. Thomas More School, Gateshead | Komatsu UK |
| Uppingham Community College, Leicestershire | The Database (Nottingham) Ltd.,<br>Central Engineering Supplies Ltd. |

### Grant-maintained Schools

**Mr. Byers:** To ask the Secretary of State which grant-maintained schools have applied to amend their admissions policy so as to introduce selection on the ground of ability; in each case what proportion are to be selected and in which schools; and when permission to amend the admissions policy was granted. [22067]

**Mr. Robin Squire:** The table gives details of section 89/96 proposals and other applications which have been approved or are under consideration to introduce an element of selection.

| *LEAs* | *Schools* | *Nature of change* | *Decision date* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Approved proposals to introduce selection under section 89/96* | | | |
| Barnet | Queen Elizabeth Boys School | 100 per cent. selection including 10 per cent. aptitude for music | 18 August 1994 |
| Berkshire | Reading Girls School | 18 per cent. selective form of entry | 12 February 1993 |
| Cumbria | Queen Elizabeth Grammar School | 100 per cent. selection and change of age range from 13–18 to 11–18 | 31 March 1993 |
| Dorset | Budmouth GM School | 10 per cent. selection by ability | 8 August 1994 |
| Hertfordshire | Watford Grammar (Girls) School | 50 per cent. selection by ability | 28 July 1994 |
| Hertfordshire | Watford Grammar (Boys) School | 50 per cent. selection by ability | 18 August 1994 |
| Hertfordshire | Parimter's School | 50 per cent. selection by ability | 26 July 1994 |
| Hertfordshire | Rickmansworth School | 50 per cent. selection by ability | 22 July 1994 |
| Kent | Chaucer Technology College | 100 per cent. selection by aptitude for technology | 11 May 1995 |
| Kent | Homewood School | 20 per cent. selection by ability | 28 June 1994 |
| Kingston | Holy Cross School | 13 per cent. selective stream (20) and significant enlargement | 25 April 1995 |
| Lambeth | Archbishop Tenison's GM School | Introduce banding based on NFER tests | 30 March 1995 |
| Lambeth | St Martins in the Fields High School | Introduce banding based on NFER tests | 30 March 1995 |
| Wandsworth | Graveney GM School | 50 per cent. selection by ability | 28 November 1994 |
| Wandsworth | Burntwood School | 30 per cent. selection by ability | 9 January 1995 |
| *Proposals published under section 96 under consideration* | | | |
| Hammersmith and Fulham | London Oratory School | Selection of 20 boys each year aged 7 on musical and general ability | |
| Hertfordshire | Bishops Stortford High School | 50 per cent. selection by ability | |
| Kent | The Westlands School | 11 per cent. from comprehensive to bi-lateral | |

*GM schools which were approved for 10 per cent. selection by Music, Sporting Ability, Art, Drama or Technology*

| *LEAs* | *Schools* | *Nature of change* | *decision date* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Barnet | Mill Hill School | Music | October 1993 |
| Bromley | Beaverwood Girls School | Ability in performing Arts | August 1994 |
| Bromley | Cooper's School | Music Drama, Dance, Sport | June 1993 |
| Cambridge | Deacons School | Technology | August 1994 |
| Essex | King Edward VI Grammar School | Singing (Choristers) | June 1993 |
| Essex | Rainsford High School | Music and Drama | March 1994 |
| Hampshire | Crofton School | Music 5 Children only | October 1994 |
| Havering | Abbs Cross School | Music | June 1993 |
| Kensington and Chelsea | Cardinal Vaughan Memorial School | Ability in Music | August 1994 |
| Kent | Canterbury High School | Music | April 1993 |
| Kent | Chaucer Technology School | Technology | December 1993 |
| Kent | Langley Park for Boys | Music, Sport | September 1993 |
| Kingston | Beverley School | Art and/or Music | October 1994 |
| Lambeth | Dunraven School | Music | October 1993 |
| Lambeth | La Reitrate | 10 per cent. Music | September 1993 |
| Lincoln | Lincoln Christ's Hospital School | Music (10 per cent. selection on basis of aptitude | October 1994 |
| Norfolk | Cliff Park High School | 10 per cent. music on basis of talent, skill and interest | October 1994 |
| Surrey | Heathside School | Music, Sport | July 1993 |
| Surrey | Thamesmead School | Music | October 1994 |
| *Applications still under consideration* | | | |
| Hertfordshire | Dame Alice Owen | 10 per cent. selection in Music | |
| Norfolk | Wymondham College | 10 per cent. selection in music and sport for both | |

*GM schools which were approved for 10 per cent. selection by Music, Sporting Ability, Art, Drama or Technology on implementation of GM status*

| *LEAs* | *Schools* | *Nature of change* | *Decision date* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Bromley | Kemnal Manor | Technology | February 1994 |
| Cambridgeshire | Kings' School, Peterborough | Music | October 1993 |
| Enfield | Enfield Grammar School | Music, Sport | December 1993 |
| Essex | Ursuline Convent | Music | December 1993 |
| Hertfordshire | Bishop's Stortford | Music, Sport and Drama | October 1993 |
| Hertfordshire | Chancellors School | Drama, Music and Sport | December 1993 |
| Hertfordshire | Dame Alice Owen School | Music, Sport | April 1993 |
| Hertfordshire | Queen's School, Bushey | Music, Art, Sport | March 1993 |
| Kent | Charles Dickens High School | Music | February 1993 |
| Kent | Dane Court Grammar School | Music, Sport, Drama or any unusual talent | March 1994 |
| Kent | Rainham Mark Grammar School | Music, Sport, Drama or any unusual talent | February 1992 |
| Kent | Robert Naiper School | Music, Sport, Drama or any unusual talent | February 1992 |
| Kent | Westland High School | Music | January 1993 |

**Mr. Byers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what are the reasons behind grant-maintained schools being classified as private sector bodies. [22068]

**Mr. Robin Squire:** Like universities and colleges, grant-maintained schools are classified as private sector institutions by the Central Statistical Office for the purpose of national income accounting. For further details, I refer the hon. Member to the reply that my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary gave to the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) on 27 February 1995, *Official Report*, column *397*.

Grant-maintained schools are classified in this way mainly because their governors—representing parents, teachers and the local community—are not appointed by central or local government.

**Ms Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the current number of grant-maintained schools. [21661]

**Mr. Robin Squire:** There are currently 1,053 grant-maintained schools in England.

### Funding Agency for Schools

**Ms Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many people are currently employed by the Funding Agency for Schools on *(a)* a part-time basis, *(b)* a full-time basis and *(c)* a consultancy capacity. [21662]

**Mr. Robin Squire:** This is a matter for the Funding Agency for Schools. I have asked the chairman of the Funding Agency to write to the hon. Member with this information.

### Local Education Authority Staff

**Mr. Fisher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the ratio of local education authority administrators to teachers in schools. [21569]

**Mr. Robin Squire:** Information on staff employed by local authorities is collected by the local government management board.

Figures show that in June 1994, local authorities in England employed 376,665 full-time equivalent teachers and lecturers and 316,244 full-time equivalent other manual and non-manual staff involved in education, making a ratio of around 2.5 non-teaching staff to every three teachers.

The survey does not enable staff employed in schools to be separated from those employed elsewhere or administrative staff to be separated from other non-teaching staff.

### Computer Pornography

**Mr. Timms:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education when the departmental guidelines for schools and parents on computer pornography will be published; and how many leaflets will be available. [21189]

**Mr. Forth:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Congleton (Mrs. Winterton) on 28 March 1995 *Official Report*, column *570*.

### Class Sizes

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what was the number and percentage of pupils in primary schools in *(a)* January 1980, *(b)* January 1991, *(c)* January 1992, *(d)* January 1993, *(e)* January 1994 and *(f)* January 1995 being taught in classes of 40 or more in maintained schools in each local education authority and in total; [21197]

(2) what was the number and percentage of pupils in secondary schools in *(a)* January 1980, *(b)* January 1991, *(c)* January 1992, *(d)* January 1993, *(e)* January 1994 and *(f)* January 1995 being taught in classes of 40 or more in maintained schools in each local education authority and in total. [21198]

**Mr. Robin Squire:** Information on pupils in classes of size 40 and over in maintained primary and secondary schools for years 1980, 1991, 1992, 1993 and 1994 has been placed in the Library. Information for January 1995 will not be available until the autumn.

**Ms Morris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will now commission research to assess the effect of class size on pupil performance. [21313]

**Mr. Robin Squire:** The Department will continue to monitor research in this area, but has at present no plans to commission such research. There is no conclusive evidence from a large volume of accumulated research that marginal reductions in class size affect pupil performance. What matters most is the quality of teaching.

### City of Liverpool Community College

**Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representation she has received about the City of Liverpool community college; and if she will establish an independent inquiry into the governance and management of the City of Liverpool community college. [21142]

**Mr. Boswell:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Mr. Wareing) on 3 March 1995 *Official Report*, column *774*. Since then, the Department has received one letter about the college, from a member of its staff.

## LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

### Mr. Mohd Ashfaq

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if leave to appeal to the Immigration Appeal Tribunal has been granted to the Home Office in the case of Mr. Mohd Ashfaq: ref: TH/1740/94; IMM/C2021. [20669]

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** Leave to appeal to the tribunal was refused on 6 April 1995.

### Divorce Cases

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many cases of divorce have been reported during the last year; and what were the comparable figures in each of the previous four years. [20694]

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** The question concerns a specific operational matter on which the chief executive of the Court Service is best placed to provide an answer and I have accordingly asked the chief executive to reply direct.

*Letter from M. D. Huebner to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 27 April 1995:*

The Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, has asked me to reply to your question about the number of divorces reported during the past five years.

The following statistics refer to the number of divorce cases in which a final decree has been made, to end the marriage:

1990: 147080
1991: 147385
1992: 148046
1993: 154062
1994: 146932[1]

The statistics cover England only. I understand that you have asked separately for information from the Welsh Office. You may like to know that all judicial statistics for England and Wales are provided by the Lord Chancellor's Department. The figures for Wales are as follows:

1990: 8159
1991: 8542
1992: 8633
1993: 8517
1994: 7941[1]

The Welsh Office have been provided with this information and will reply separately to your Question.

[1]These figures are provisional and therefore liable to revision to take account of late amendments.

### Market Testing

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will estimate the cost of employing consultants in connection with market testing programmes in which his Department has been engaged since their inception. [21372]

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** The estimated cost of employing consultants in connection with market testing programmes from April 1992 to date is £510,800.

### Queen's Counsel (Applications)

**Sir John Gorst:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many applications for Queen's Counsel his office has received in each year from 1992 to 1995; what proportion of these applications were from *(a)* women and *(b)* members of ethnic minorities, and what proportion of applicants from each category were successful. [21840]

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** The information is set out in the table. Applications for appointment as Queen's Counsel are invited in September each year and no applications have therefore yet been received in 1995. The figures exclude those cases where the applicant subsequently withdrew his application.

| | *Year applications received* | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | *1992* | *1993* | *1994* |
| Total applicants | 472 | 539 | 492 |
| Total successful | 70 | 77 | 71 |
| *Women* | | | |
| Applicants | 37 | 43 | 42 |
| Percentage of total applications | 8 | 8 | 9 |
| Successful | 6 | 9 | 8 |
| Percentage of women's applications | 16 | 21 | 19 |
| *Applicants who have declared a non-white ethnic background* | | | |
| Applicants | 14 | 11 | 12 |
| Percentage of total applications | 3 | 2 | 2 |
| Successful | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Percentage of applications from those declaring a non-white ethnic background | 7 | 9 | 8 |

### Civil Servants

**Mr. Ainger:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many civil service appointments were made to administrative assistants and administrative officer posts in his Department and the agencies for which he is accountable in each quarter from September 1993 until April 1995. [21764]

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** The Lord Chancellor's Department has recruited administrative assistants and administrative officers as shown in the table.

The Lord Chancellor had responsibility for three agencies in the period covered by the question: Her Majesty's Land Registry, the Public Record Office, and the Public Trust Office. Figures for the Public Trust Office, which became an agency in July 1994, are included in the table. I have asked the chief executives of Her Majesty's Land Registry and the Public Record Office to reply direct.

*Quarterly recruitment of administrative assistants and administrative officers in the lord chancellors department*

| Quarter | Administrative assistants | Administrative officers | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| 01 October 1993 to 31 December 1994 | 54 | 222 | 276 |
| 01 January 1994 to 31 March 1994 | 52 | 217 | 269 |
| 01 April 1994 to 30 June 1994 | 70 | 250 | 320 |
| 01 July 1994 to 30 September 1994 | 85 | 269 | 354 |
| 01 October 1994 to 30 December 1994 | 84 | 265 | 349 |
| 01 January 1995 to 31 March 1995 | 52 | 216 | 268 |

*Note:*
The figures shown include the recruitment of administrative assistants and administrative officers to the Public Trust Office. The Public Trust Office became an agency in July 1994.

*Letter from John Manthorpe to Mr. Nick Ainger, dated 1 May 1995:*

I have been asked by the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, to reply to your recent question concerning Civil Service appointments to administrative assistant and administrative officer posts in each quarter from September 1993 to April 1995. During that period, the Land Registry made no such appointments.

*Letter from Sarah Tyacke to Mr. Nick Ainger, dated 1 May 1995:*

I have been asked by the Lord Chancellor's Parliamentary Secretary to reply to your question relating to appointments made to administrative assistant and administrative officer posts in the Public Record Office in each quarter from September 1993 to April 1995.

The following appointments were made:

| | Administrative Assistant | Administrative Officer |
|---|---|---|
| September 1993–December 1993 | 0 | 0 |
| January 1994–March 1994 | 0 | 0 |
| April 1994–June 1994 | 0 | 0 |
| July 1994–September 1994 | 0 | 1 |
| October 1994–December 1994 | 0 | 0 |
| January 1995–April 1995 | 0 | 1 |

### Legal Aid

**Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list the 10 solicitors firms who have received the largest sums of money from the legal aid scheme, and name the 10 barristers who have received the largest sum of money from the legal aid scheme for the most recent year for which information is available. [21884]

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

### Conflicts of Interest

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department on how many occasions during the last five years *(a)* civil servants and *(b)* special advisers in his Department or its agencies have declared conflicts of interest; and how many instructions have been issued about their retention, disposal or management. [21389]

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** For the Department and agencies for which the Lord Chancellor is responsible any conflicts of interest involving civil servants would have been dealt with in accordance with the established guidance. Records of the number of cases are not held centrally. Neither the Department nor its agencies have employed special advisers during the last five years.

## DUCHY OF LANCASTER

### Open Government

35. **Mr. Fisher:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what has been the cost to the Government of applications for information under the code of practice in open government in the last financial year for which figures are available. [20155]

**Mr. Horam:** Code requests have been dealt with as part of larger information flows, and costs have not been recorded separately.

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what new proposals he has to increase open government. [20149]

**Mr. David Hunt:** The Government remain committed to the proposals contained in the 1993 White Paper.

### Citizens Charter

36. **Lady Olga Maitland:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what inquiries he has received from overseas with regard to the citizens charter in the last year. [20156]

**Mr. David Hunt:** Many, from countries throughout the world. We are an acknowledged world leader in this area of public sector reform.

### Government Agencies

37. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many people are employed in relation to press and public relations works in Government agencies. [20157]

**Mr. David Hunt:** Of the 885 staff with an information officer discipline, 317 are employed in next steps agencies.

### Magistrates

38. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has received about the work of the magistrates in the Duchy; and if he will make a statement. [20158]

**Mr. David Hunt:** I am responsible for the appointment of magistrates in Lancashire, Greater Manchester and Merseyside. The Lord Chancellor's Department is responsible for training and administering magistrates. I have discussions with magistrates during my visits to courthouses in the Duchy area.

I pay tribute to the Duchy's magistrates, as I do to those in the remainder of England and Wales. As hon. Members know, they are drawn from all walks of life, give their

time freely, often at some sacrifice, to do this important work.

The office of magistrate calls for wisdom, maturity and experience of life. Persons over the age of 60 are appointed only in exceptional circumstances.

We try to achieve a balanced age structure and aim to find candidates under the age of 55, especially those in their 30s and 40s. Where the age structure of the bench allows or a candidate is particularly well qualified, I will consider older candidates. It is rare for someone below the age of 27 to be appointed.

In accordance with the Justices of the Peace Act 1979, justices' names are placed on the supplement list when they reach the age of 70 and no longer undertake active bench duties.

Reorganisation of magistrates courts committees in Greater Manchester is a matter for local consultation and discussion with the Lord Chancellor's Department. Any question on this subject should therefore be referred to my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department.

Penalties available to the courts are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. However, the Government keep under review the scope for decriminalising offences currently dealt with under the criminal law.

### National Science Week

39. **Mr. Hawkins:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what support his Department is giving to National Science Week in schools for future years. [20159]

**Mr. Horam:** Preparations for next year's week are at a very early stage and include consideration of ways to encourage greater participation by schools. The Office of Science and Technology will be making £200,000 available for the Week. This will come from the budget for promoting the public understanding of science, engineering and technology which the Government have increased by 25 per cent. to £1.25 million in 1995–96.

### Market Testing

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will estimate the cost of employing consultants in connection with market testing programmes in which his Department has been engaged since their inception. [21363]

**Mr. Horam:** The cost to the Cabinet Office, including OPSS and its agencies, HMSO and COI of employing consultants in connection with market-testing programmes from their inception to 31 March 1995 is some £1,088,000.

### Civil Servants

**Mr. Ainger:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many civil service appointments were made to administrative assistant and administrative officer posts in his Department and agencies for which he is accountable in each quarter from September 1993 until April 1995.

**Mr. Horam:** I am also answering on behalf of the Prime Minister.

The number of permanent appointments to the administrative assistant and administrative officer grades are detailed in the following table. The figures include new recruits, reinstatements and transfers from other Government Departments.

| | *October–December 1993* | *January–March 1994* | *April–June1994* | *July–September 1994* | *October–December 1994* | *January–March 1995* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Central Department | | | | | | |
| AA | 6 | 7 | 2 | 4 | 8 | 5 |
| AO | 1 | 1 | 1 | — | — | 3 |
| Chessington | | | | | | |
| AA | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| AO | — | — | — | — | — | 4 |
| CS College | | | | | | |
| AA | 2 | — | — | 1 | — | — |
| AO | 6 | 6 | 2 | 6 | 4 | 1 |
| OHAS | | | | | | |
| AA | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| AO | — | — | 1 | — | — | 3 |
| RAS | | | | | | |
| AA | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| AO | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| COI | | | | | | |
| AA | — | — | 2 | — | 1 | 2 |
| AO | — | 1 | 1 | 1 | — | — |

Administrative appointments to HMSO are at paybands 1 to 5. The number of appointments were as follows:

| | *October–December 1993* | *January–March 1994* | *April–June 1994* | *July–September 1994* | *October–December 1994* | *January–March 1995* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| HMSO | 6 | 80 | 113 | 16 | 9 | 30 |

### Hospitality

**Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how much was spent on official hospitality by his Department in 1994–95.

**Mr. Horam:** Expenditure in 1994–95 on official hospitality by the Cabinet Office, including the Office of Public Service and Science, and executive agencies was as follows:

£

| | *1994–95* |
|---|---|
| Cabinet Office (including OPSS)[1] | 17,550 |
| OPSS agencies | 650 |
| COI | 9,200 |
| HMSO[2] | 31,600 |

*Notes*

[1] The figure for the Cabinet Office excludes expenditure by the Office of the Prime Minister, which was the subject of a separate Answer by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

[2] HMSO's figure is based on their accounting year 1 January–31 December.

### Conflicts of Interest

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on how many occasions during the last five years *(a)* civil servants and *(b)* special advisers in his Department or its agencies have declared conflicts of interest; and how many instructions have been issued about their retention; disposal or management. [21393]

**Mr. David Hunt:** For the Departments and agencies for which I am responsible, and other areas which fall to the Cabinet Office votes, any conflicts of interest involving civil servants and special advisers would have been dealt with in accordance with the established guidance. Records of the number of cases are not held centrally.

## AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

### Relocation Costs

**Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list for each agency and the central Department for which he is responsible *(a)* the total amount of removal costs and associated expenses reimbursed to officials who were required to relocate as part of their employment, *(b)* the amount of each of the highest three claims that were concluded and settled and *(c)* the average amount of each claim in each of the last three years. [19667]

**Mr. Waldegrave:** Because relocation expenses in my Department are met from a centrally administered budget, it is not possible to provide information separately for the core Department and agencies except at disproportionate cost. However, total relocation costs paid in the last three financial years, including payment made to a relocation company which acts on behalf of the Department, amounted to £10,907,201. A significant part of this expenditure was incurred in order to relocate staff working in the London area to a new headquarters building in York and to achieve other organisational and structural changes in the Department and agencies. These projects will realise offsetting savings elsewhere in the Departmental running costs.

The three most expensive individual home moves, again including relocation company payments, cost £62,982, £66,204 and £71,873 respectively.

During the same period, the average cost of a home move is estimated as follows:-

1992–93: £20,500

1993–94: £22,500

1994–95: £22,500 (provisional)

### Fishing

**Sir Michael Marshall:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his oral statement of 18 April, if he will give further details of the satellite surveillance system which will be used to monitor fishing in international waters off Newfoundland under the terms of the negotiated settlement between the European Community and the Government of Canada. [20505]

**Mr. Jack** *[holding answer 21 April 1995]:* Under the control and enforcement provisions of the negotiated settlement between the European Union and Canada, it is envisaged that the North-west Atlantic Fisheries Organisation contracting parties will install satellite-tracking devices on 35 per cent. of their vessels fishing in the NAFO regulatory area where the combined fishing effort of their vessels is 300 days or more. The installation is intended to take place, as rapidly as is realistically possible, when the vessels make a port call or depart for the NRA. The system installed must be able to transmit satellite signals automatically to a land-based system, to allow the continuous tracking by the contracting party of its fishing vessel. The contracting party must then transmit, on a real-time basis, entry and exit messages from satellite-equipped vessels to the NAFO secretariat, which in turn will transmit the information to contracting parties with an inspection vessel in the NAFO convention area.

Contracting parties will also be required to co-operate with those contracting parties which have a NAFO inspection vessel or aircraft in the convention area, in order to exchange information on the location of fishing vessels equipped with satellite devices and, if requested, to provide information relating to the identification of a vessel.

### Public Bodies

**Dr. Wright:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which of the executive non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department have *(a)* a statutory requirement to admit members of the public to all board or committee meetings and *(b)* a statutory requirement to hold open meetings for the public. [20870]

**Mr. Jack** *[holding answer 26 April 1995]:* None of the executive non-departmental public bodies for which my right hon. Friend is responsible has a statutory requirement to admit members of the public to board or committee meetings, or to hold open meetings for the public.

### Livestock Hauliers

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what support the Government are giving to livestock hauliers to ensure that they can continue their trade. [20916]

**Mrs. Browning:** The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food sets statutory requirements to protect the welfare of animals in transit, which provide a framework within which livestock hauliers may lawfully carry on their trade; provides advice on best practice and on legal requirements; and, in relation to exports, promptly carries out its responsibilities with regard to the issue of documentation and the checking of proposed new routes for compliance with welfare requirements.

### Fish Conservation

**Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his oral answer of 18 April, *Official Report,* column 22, what proposals he has for more international work on the breeding and oceanic habits of turbot, bream and halibut; and what study he is making of the effects on conservation of deeper sea fishing technology and of happenings under the ocean's surface in relation to the establishment of fishing quota for turbot, bream and halibut. [21317]

**Mr. Jack** *[holding answer 24 April 1995]:* Scientific studies on the breeding and behaviour of Greenland halibut and other species in the north-west Atlantic is carried out by the Scientific Council of the North-west Atlantic Fisheries Organisation, which also carries out work on the impact of fishing technology and of the marine environment. I look forward to receiving further advice at the next annual meeting of the organisation in September.

### Market Testing

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will estimate the cost of employing consultations in connection with market-testing programmes in which his Department has been engaged since their inception. [21362]

**Mr. Jack:** For the period November 1991 to date the total cost to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, together with its executive agencies, of employing consultants in connection with market testing programmes is estimated to be £1,394,456.

### Brewing Industry

**Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussion he *(a)* has held in the last year and *(b)* proposes to hold on the effect of the European single market on the British brewing industry. [21865]

**Mr. Jack:** My right hon. Friend has frequent meetings with representatives of the brewing industry at which issues relating to the single market are discussed.

## PRIME MINISTER

### Business Consultants

**Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Prime Minister (1) if he will make a statement on the relationship between the Department and Mr. Edmund Sykes; [21706]

(2) if he will make a statement on the relationship between the Department and Mr. Stephen Crouch. [21705]

**The Prime Minister** *[holding answer 28 April 1995]:* I am unaware of any such relationships.

### Civil Servants

**Mr. Ainger:** To ask the Prime Minster how many civil service appointments were made to the administrative assistant and administrative officer posts in his Department and the agencies for which he is accountable in each quarter from September 1993 until April 1995. [21761]

**The Prime Minister:** For these purposes, my office is part of the Cabinet Office. I refer the hon. Member to the reply given today by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service and Science.

### Local Education Authorities

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Prime Minister (1) pursuant to his oral answer of 25 April, *Official Report,* column 675, concerning the ratio of administrators to teachers, if he will give the relevant reference in *Social Trends*; [21711]

(2), pursuant to his oral answer of 21 March, *Official Report,* column 140, if he will publish evidence showing that there are two administrators for every three teachers across the country. [21710]

**The Prime Minister:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) on 27 April, *Official Report,* column *613.*

### Mr. Fouad Makhzoumi

**Mr. Byers :** To ask the Prime Minister if the right hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) when Minister for Defence Procurement under the "Question of Procedure for Ministers" referred to the Prime Minister for his advice on the approach he had received for Mr. Fouad Makhzoumi concerning the sale of arms to Lebanon. [21562]

**The Prime Minister:** Discussions between myself and Ministers are private.

### Lockerbie

**Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will discuss with Chancellor Kohl the reasons for which the Rhein-Main routine airport film of the loading of luggage on to the Boeing 727 feeder aircraft for Pan Am flight 103 on 21 December 1988 was confiscated; and whether this information was conveyed to the Dumfries and Galloway police investigating the Lockerbie crime. [21798]

**The Prime Minister:** I have no plans to discuss the Lockerbie case with Chancellor Kohl. It would not be appropriate to disclose what communications have passed

between foreign authorities and the investigating authorities in this country while criminal proceedings are pending.

**Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Prime Minster, pursuant to his reply of 10 January, *Official Report*, column *20*, if he will list all the investigations carried out in relation to Lockerbie, referred to in Government document JRE 10119.045 attached to the letter of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton) of 21 April to the hon. Member for Linlithgow; and what evidence he has for the belief adduced in that document that no further inquiry is warranted. [21429]

**The Prime Minister** *[holding answer 28 April 1995]:* I understand that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland did not write to the hon. Member on 21 April referring to investigations carried out in relation to Lockerbie or in respect of the document referred to. The document to which the hon. Member appears to be referring was produced for internal use and I am not therefore prepared to comment further on it.

**Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 28 March, *Official Report*, columns *545–46*, and to his letter to the hon. Member for Linlithgow of 10 April, what response he has had from the United States authorities as to the authenticity of a signal, a copy of which was sent to him and to the US embassy in London, by the hon. Member for Linlithgow, purporting to be a threat to the life of Major Charles McKee, who died over Lockerbie, by the agencies of the US Government. [21407]

**The Prime Minister** *[holding answer 28 April 1995]:* As the hon. Member has been advised by my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and by the US authorities, the investigation has concluded that the document is a fabrication.

### Security Services

**Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Prime Minister what arrangements exist for hon. Members to visit the headquarters of the security services. [21889]

**The Prime Minister:** It is not normal practice for the security and intelligence agencies to host visits to their headquarters by hon. Members.

### Acceptance of Gifts

**Mr. Alton:** To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 24 April, *Official Report*, column *344*, if he will give the reasons for his policy of regarding the number of occasions on which the Government has been approached for advice on the suitability of accepting a financial gift, payment or commission by a Government Minister or an hon. Member or their relatives as confidential. [21428]

**The Prime Minister** *[holding answer 28 April 1995]:* As I said in my previous answer, advice on specific cases is private. No central record is kept of the occasions on which such advice is sought.

### Nursery Education

**Ms Hodge:** To ask the Prime Minister (1) how many hours per child per week of nursery education he intends in his commitment to nursery education for all four-year-olds; [22032]

(2) whether his commitment to nursery education for all four-year-olds is a commitment to education with qualified teachers for all children from the day of their fourth birthday. [22033]

**The Prime Minister:** My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education is looking at a range of options for implementing my commitment to provide, over time, a pre-school place for every four-year-old whose parents wish them to take it up. How many hours per week each place should provide, when the provision should start for each child, and appropriate staff qualifications and adult to child ratios are among the issues under consideration.

### Ministers (Car Hire)

**Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to the answer of 5 April, *Official Report*, column *1131*, if he will place in the Library a list of the Ministers' hired cars, giving the purpose of the hire, on how many occasions cars have been hired, the cost of private care hire facilities through the Government car service and the purposes for which cars were supplied *(a)* to members of the Government, *(b)* to civil servants and *(c)* to others for each year since 1987; [21666]

(2) if he will publish information on *(a)* the cost and *(b)* the numbers of cars hired from the private sector for the transport of members of the Government for each year since 1987 where it is available. [21665]

**The Prime Minister:** The information as requested is not available.

**Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 5 April, *Official Report*, column *1131*, in what circumstances private hire facilities for members of the Government may be provided for non-government business; and if he will publish the relevant guidance issued. [21664]

**The Prime Minister:** I have nothing further to add to the replies given to the hon. Member of 5 April, *Official Report*, column *1131* and 24 April, *Official Report*, column *344*.

## DEFENCE

### Entertainment

**Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has yet received Sir Peter Cazalet's report on representational entertainment in the armed forces; and if he will make a statement. [22342]

**Mr. Soames:** My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence received Sir Peter Cazalet's report on 25 April. I have today placed a copy in the Library of the House, and the report is available on request from my Department.

In accordance with his terms of reference Sir Peter studies the official entertainment conducted by commanders at all levels including the occupants of official service residences—properties furnished and equipped to a superior standard reflecting the entertainment responsibilities of the occupant. He has concluded that there is a legitimate requirement for the armed forces to entertain and has endorsed the concept of entertainment in officers' own homes. He draws attention

to the high professional standards of house staff, chefs and stewards employed in support of official entertainment. He has made a number of recommendations about the way that entertainment is funded and the support that senior officers receive for this purpose. Additionally he has recommended that the concept of official service residences should be retained, but that the criteria for entitlement to such properties should be reviewed which should lead to a reduction in their number.

My right hon. and learned Friend and I endorse Sir Peter's conclusions, including that service personnel have a need to entertain to an appropriate standard in support of their responsibilities. We accept his recommendations and shall now be undertaking further work in order to take them forward.

I would like to express our thanks to Sir Peter for undertaking this study.

### Ordnance

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what quantity of *(a)* chemical and *(b)* conventional weapons, originally dumped in the waters surrounding Britain, was identified as having leaked onto British shores by the Royal Navy (Plymouth Command) bomb and mine disposal unit in each of the last 30 years. [21938]

**Mr. Soames:** It is not possible to determine the precise origin of all ordnance washed up onto British shores. There is no evidence, however, to suggest that any of the ordnance recovered in United Kingdom waters and disposed of by the Royal Navy's Plymouth clearance diving unit had originally been dumped.

### David Hart

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions he has had with Mr. David Hart concerning plans to privatise his Department's housing stock; what role Mr. Hart had in the preparation of these plans; and if he will make a statement. [21885]

**Mr. Soames:** I have nothing to add to my answer of 22 March, *Official Report*, column *218*.

### Procurement

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's policy concerning industrial participation in procurement purchases from abroad; when industrial participation is to be sought; what assessment he has made of his Department's industrial participation policy; and if he will make a statement. [21886]

**Mr. Freeman:** Until international defence procurement can occur on a fully open reciprocal basis, the Government pursue a policy of asking foreign companies bidding for United Kingdom orders generally to offset the cost of such orders with work placed in the UK. Consequently my Department takes care to ensure that industrial participation proposals by foreign companies are carried through and involve high quality work being placed with UK companies. Our policy is currently to seek industrial participation proposals on procurement purchases from abroad on purchases over £10 million—£50 million in the case of France—while seeking to negotiate bilateral mutual waivers of IP requirements with members of the western European armaments group.

### Franco-German Bilateral Armament Agency

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's policy concerning the Franco-German bilateral armaments agency; what consideration he has given to British membership of this body; what discussions he has had with his German and French counterparts to discuss British participation; and if he will make a statement. [21888]

**Mr. Freeman:** The United Kingdom has expressed the wish to be involved from the outset in discussions on the structure and operating principles for the planned armaments co-operation structure. I have discussed with my French and German counterparts the UK's interest in participation and consideration is presently being given to the practicalities involved. We will be discussing the issues further with French and German colleagues at official level.

### Intergovernmental Conference

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's policy concerning article 223 of the treaty of Rome; and if he will be seeking the abolition of the article at the intergovernmental conference. [21887]

**Mr. Freeman:** The Government are currently reviewing article 223 in preparation for the intergovernmental conference in 1996.

### Special Advisers

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what have been the dates of employment of his special advisers since his appointment. [21934]

**Mr. Freeman:** The information requested is as follows:

| *Name* | *Joined the Department* | *Left the Department* |
|---|---|---|
| Perry Miller | April 1992 | February 1993 |
| Crispin Blunt | February 1993 | Employment continuing. |

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what instructions his special adviser has given to his Department's civil servants to make inquiries of a political nature concerning the policies of the Labour party; and on what authority. [21933]

**Mr. Rifkind:** The special adviser has not given any instructions to my Department to make inquiries about the policies of the Labour party. Following the hon. Member for South Shield's lecture to the Royal United Services Institute, on 1 March, the special adviser asked a member of the parliamentary office to ask the hon. Member's office the exact date of his resignation from the Opposition Front Bench.

### Portland Naval Base

**Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will set out the cost of employing *(a)* external surveyors and *(b)* consultants in relation to the sale of Portland naval base. [21302]

**Mr. Soames:** It is not my Department's practice to disclose information relating to the cost of employing external surveyors and consultants as the information is commercial in confidence.

### NATO Rapid Reaction Corps

**Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the organisation of the NATO rapid reaction corps; what forces have been assigned to its command; which NATO nations have contributed such forces; and what is its relationship to the corps formed by Germany, France, Belgium, Luxembourg and Spain. [21080]

**Mr. Soames:** The ACE rapid reaction corps consists of a multinational corps headquarters, 10 divisions and corps troops. Of the 10 divisions under its command the HQ plans to deploy with up to four for any one operation. The United Kingdom has contributed two divisions—one includes an attached Italian brigade and the other an attached Danish brigade. Further divisions are contributed by Italy, Germany, Portugal, Turkey, Greece, the US and Spain. The remaining two divisions are multinational and include brigade contributions from Belgium and the Netherlands. In addition to the nations listed above, Canada, France, and Norway are represented by staff in HQ ARRC.

HQ ARRC and HQ Eurocorps are separate organisations which maintain a liaison and co-operation link.

**Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the NATO rapid reaction corps is now fully operational. [21079]

**Mr. Soames:** The headquarters of the Allied Command Europe rapid reaction corps was declared fully operational on 25 April 1995.

### Market Testing

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will estimate the cost of employing consultants in connection with market testing programmes in which his Department has been engaged since their inception. [21364]

**Mr. Freeman:** The total cost of employing commercial consultants in support of the MOD's "Competing for Quality" programme during the period from April 1992 to March 1995 was just over £6 million.

### Conflicts of Interest

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions during the last five years *(a)* civil servants and *(b)* special advisers in his Department or its agencies have declared conflicts of interest; and how many instructions have been issued about their retention, disposal or management. [21394]

**Mr. Freeman:** Although all staff, including special advisers, are required to declare conflicts of interest to line management, no records of this information is maintained centrally.

### Civil Service

**Mr. Ainger:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many civil service appointments were made to administrative assistant and administrative officer posts in his Department and the agencies for which he is accountable in each quarter from September 1993 until April 1995. [21772]

**Mr. Freeman:** The information requested, which includes full and part time staff up to the end of February 1995, is as follows:

| | *Administrative Officer* | *Administrative Assistant* |
|---|---|---|
| *1993* | | |
| October to December | 121 | 246 |
| *1994* | | |
| January to March | 145 | 260 |
| April to June | 70 | 206 |
| July to September | 83 | 190 |
| October to December | 82 | 151 |
| *1995* | | |
| January to February | 92 | 109 |

### Defence Export Services Organisation

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) of 20 April, *Official Report*, column *228*, what grade civil servant is Mr. Miles Faulkner; and what is his annual salary. [21171]

**Mr. Freeman:** Mr. Faulkner is serving on a fixed term appointment in a grade 6 post. It is not the practice to comment on the pay of individual officers.

In my answer to the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) of 20 April 1995, *Official Report*, column *228*, I said that the duration of Mr. Faulkner's contract was

"Two years extended by one year to March 1996".

This should have been

"Two years extended by one year to March 1995 and then further extended to March 1996".

I apologise for this error.

### Hospitality

**Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much was spent on official hospitality by his Department in 1994–95. [21213]

**Mr. Soames:** My Department spent £5,103,000 on official hospitality in the financial year 1994–95. This figure includes expenditure incurred by the Ministry of Defence itself, by formations and establishments of the armed forces at home and abroad, and by individual officers occupying command and international appointments for which entertainment allowances are payable.

### Nagorno-Karabakh

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if British forces will form part of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe's peacekeeping mission to Nagorno-Karabakh. [21336]

**Mr. Soames:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North East (Mr. Campbell) on 22 February 1995, *Official Report*, column *256*.

### Riot Control

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what restrictions the chemical weapons convention will impose on the use of riot control agents or other law enforcement chemicals in operations by United Kingdom armed forces, including those involved in peacekeeping operations. [21337]

**Mr. Soames:** The chemical weapons convention, when it enters into force, will ban the use of riot control agents as a method of warfare, but allow their use for law enforcement. My Department's policy on the use of riot control agents is in accordance with the provisions of the convention.

### Arms Sales

**Mr. Byers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what legal advice the former Minister for Defence Procurement received before meeting Mr. Fouad Makhzoumi to discuss arms sales to Lebanon. [21561]

**Mr. Freeman:** No legal advice was necessary.

### Defence Equipment (Lebanon)

**Mr. Byers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions since April 1992 second hand arms have been given free of charge to other Governments for their use; on what date the decision was taken to provide 1,000 second hand self-loading rifles free of charge to the Government of Lebanon; which Minister was responsible for the decision; and what was the estimated value of the rifles. [21563]

**Mr. Freeman:** Since April 1992 my Department has approved gifts of defence equipment to eight overseas Governments. On 8 October 1993 formal financial approval was given at official level in accordance with internal departmental instructions for a gift to the Lebanese Government of surplus defence equipment to the value of £40,000. After discussion with the Lebanese authorities, it was agreed to make a gift of 500 surplus self-loading rifles to this value.

**Mr. Byers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 24 April, *Official Report*, column *395*, on what date the former Minister for Defence Procurement, the hon. Member for Thanet, South, was first approached by Mr. Fouad Makhzoumi about the prospects for the sale of defence equipment to Lebanon; which of the meetings held with Mr. Makhzoumi were attended by officials from the Defence Export Services Organisation; and on what date the decision was taken to sell former British vessels and arms to the Lebanon. [21609]

**Mr. Freeman:** The right hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) advised officials in the Defence Export Services Organisation that he had been approached, on 6 July 1992, by Mr. Fouad Makhzoumi about the prospects for the sale of defence equipment to Lebanon. DESO officials were present at the meeting with Mr. Makhzoumi on 20 October 1993 and at the dinner in honour of the Lebanese chief of the naval staff on 17 November 1993 referred to in my answer to the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North, (Mr. Wilson) on 24 April 1995, *Official Report*, column *395*. FCO officials were present at the dinner for the Lebanese Information Minister on 25 February 1993.

Details of decisions by commercial companies to sell arms and defence equipment are a matter for the commercial suppliers and the customer. In the case of Government-to-Government sales, the decision to supply the former RN patrol craft to Lebanon was taken in March 1992.

### Sapper Jason Whitton

**Mr. Hood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to be able to reply to the letter from the hon. Member for Clydesdale of 8 December 1994, concerning Sapper Jason Whitton. [21892]

**Mr. Soames:** I am grateful to the hon. Member for sending a further copy of his letter. My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence will write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

### Weapons Theft

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information his Department holds in respect of the quantity of missiles and other weapons stolen from a NATO base near Cologne in 1973; what security they are currently held under; and if he will make a statement. [20724]

**Mr. Soames:** Extensive inquiries by my Department have failed to trace any such incident.

### Anzac Day

**Mr. Corbett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence by whom his Department was represented at the Anzac Day commemoration at the Cenotaph, London, on 25 April. [21800]

**Mr. Soames:** My Department was represented by Rear Admiral R. O. Irwin, Air Vice Marshal J. D. K. Feesley AFC and Major General S.W. St. John Lytle.

### HMS Daedalus

**Mr. Viggers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future of HMS Daedalus. [21837]

**Mr. Soames:** As announced by my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for Defence on 16 July 1991, *Official Report*, columns *148-49*. HMS Daedalus will close in April 1996. Should no further defence use be identified for the establishment, we expect the site to be offered for sale following the formal decommissioning of the air station.

### Psychological Coercion

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what experiments his Department has carried out on psychological coercion in the last 30 years; if he will list the names of the experiments carried out; if he will give the dates when these experiments occurred; how many people were tested; and if he will make a statement. [20851]

**Mr. Soames** *[holding answer 25 April 1995]:* An examination of papers held centrally has found no reference to experiments carried out on psychological coercion.

### Radiological Experiments

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what radiological, biological or chemical experiments his Department has carried out in the last 30 years, *(a)* on volunteers without their knowledge and *(b)* in public areas; and if he will make a statement. [20847]

**Mr. Soames** *[holding answer 25 April 1995]:* We know of no radiological experiments which have been carried out on volunteers by MOD without their knowledge. The same position applies with respect to volunteers at the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment, where no studies involving volunteers are carried out unless there is a clear military need and a detailed protocol has been reviewed, and approved, by an independent ethics committee in accordance with guidelines laid down by the Royal College of Physicians. Prior to participating in a study, the volunteers have the procedures, potential effects and possible risks explained to them in lay terms by an officer. They can withdraw from the study at any time without having to give a reason.

No experiments involving the use of radioactive substances or chemical or biological warfare agents have been carried out in public areas in the last 30 years. However, stimulants of such agents were used in some 100 experiments in the period of 1964 to 1977. The possible effect on the health and safety of personnel in public areas was fully considered prior to conducting the studies. Accordingly, the stimulants used were judged to present no risk to public health. The majority of these experiments involved releasing the stimulants at sea. There have been no experiments in public areas in the last 16 years.

## HOME DEPARTMENT

### Police (Foot Patrols)

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average number of officers on foot patrol in Sussex in each month since January 1994. [20603]

**Mr. Maclean:** I understand from the chief constable that this information is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

### Livestock Hauliers

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what support the Government are giving to livestock hauliers to ensure that they can continue their trade. [20915]

**Mr. Maclean:** The enforcement of the law in relation to demonstrations against live animal exports is an operational matter for chief officers of police.

### Schengen Agreement

**Mr. Robert N. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether under *(a)* the Schengen agreement or *(b)* other agreements in respect of movements within the European Union, non-EU passport holders carrying valid visas for the United Kingdom may travel from the United Kingdom to other EU states without separate visas being required; and if he will make a statement. [21240]

**Mr. Nicholas Baker** *[holding answer 27 April 1995]:* As the United Kingdom is not a party to the Schengen agreement, a visa issued by the United Kingdom would not be valid for travel to a Schengen country. The draft external frontiers convention would, if implemented provide for, among other things, a form of mutual recognition of visas for a short stay, which would exempt the holder from the requirement to obtain a separate national visa for entry to any of the member states of the European Union. The text of the draft convention, agreement to which is subject to unanimity in the Council, remains under discussion.

### Police Cells

**Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officer hours were used to police the imprisonment of prisoners in police cells in *(a)* 1979, *(b)* 1985, *(c)* 1990 and *(d)* the last year for which figures are available. [21269]

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

*Letter from Richard Tilt to Mrs. Barbara Roche, dated 1 May 1995:*

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about police officer hours used to police the imprisonment of prisoners in police cells in (a) 1979, (b) 1985, (c) 1990 and (d) the last year for which figures are available.

The information is not recorded centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

**Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total cost to the public purse of keeping prisoners in police cells *(a)* in London and *(b)* elsewhere in England and Wales for each of the last 15 years. [21606]

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

*Letter from Richard Tilt to Mrs. Barbara Roche, dated 1 May 1995:*

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about the cost of keeping prisoners in police cells in London and elsewhere in England and Wales for each of the last 15 years.

No expenditure on the use of police cells was incurred before 1981–82. Separate figures for costs incurred in holding prisoners in police cells in the Metropolitan Police District are not available. The information for England and Wales, including London, is contained in the attached table.

*Total annual expenditure on use of police cells (England and Wales) from 1981–82 to 1994–95*

| *Years* | *£ millions* |
|---|---|
| 1981–82 | 0.002 |
| 1982–83 | 3.4 |
| 1983–84 | 10.08 |
| 1984–85 | 3.4 |
| 1985–86 | 2.2 |
| 1986–87 | 6.2 |
| 1987–88 | 24.9 |
| 1988–89 | 64.9 |
| 1989–90 | 12.4 |

*Total annual expenditure on use of police cells (England and Wales) from 1981–82 to 1994–95*

| *Years* | *£ millions* |
|---|---|
| 1990–91 | 53.1 |
| 1991–92 | 94 |
| 1992–93 | 98.5 |
| 1993–94 | 11 |
| 1994–95[1] | 16 |

[1] provisional

**Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which police stations in London have accommodated prisoners in their cells in the last year; how many prisoners each has accommodated; and what proportion of officers' time in each police station was devoted to prisoners. [21603]

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

*Letter from Richard Tilt to Mrs. Barbara Roche, dated 1 May 1995:*

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about which police stations in London have accommodated prisoners in their cells in the last year; how many prisoners each has accommodated and what proportion of officers' time in each police station was devoted to prisoners.

No Prison Service prisoners have been accommodated in police cells in the Metropolitan Police District in the last year.

**Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the maximum length of days spent by a prisoner in police cells during the last year for which figures are available *(a)* in London and *(b)* elsewhere. [21604]

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

*Letter from Richard Tilt to Mrs. Barbara Roche, dated 1 May 1995:*

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about the maximum length of days spent by a prisoner in police cells during the last year for which figures are available *(a)* in London and *(b)* elsewhere.

This information is not collected centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. No Prison Service prisoners were held in police cells in the Metropolitan Police District in 1994.

**Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of prisoner nights have been spent in police cells *(a)* in London and *(b)* elsewhere in England and Wales for each of the last 15 years. [21605]

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

*Letter from Richard Tilt to Mrs. Barbara Roche, dated 1 May 1995:*

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General, from the office, to reply to your recent Question about what proportion of prisoner nights have been spent in police cells in London and elsewhere In England and Wales for each of the last 15 years.

Figures for the average number of prisoners held in police cells, including London, for each year since 1989 to date are given in the attached table. Separate figures for the Metropolitan Police District are not available.

*Average Number of Prisoners Held in Police Cells in England and Wales: 1980–1995 (26 April 1995)*

| *Year* | *Number* |
|---|---|
| 1980 | 645 |
| 1981 | 125 |
| 1982 | 47 |
| 1983 | 310 |
| 1984 | 54 |
| 1985 | 45 |
| 1986 | 119 |
| 1987 | 537 |
| 1988 | 978 |
| 1989 | 111 |
| 1990 | 661 |
| 1991 | 1,088 |
| 1992 | 1,095 |
| 1993 | 14 |
| 1994 | 173 |
| 1995[1] | 227 |

[1] To 26 April 1995

**Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average number of consecutive nights spent by a prisoner in a police cell in *(a)* 1979, *(b)* 1985, *(c)* 1990 and *(d)* the last year for which figures are available. [21708]

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

*Letter from Richard Tilt to Mrs. Barbara Roche, dated 1 May 1995:*

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General, from the office, to reply to your recent Question about the average number of consecutive nights spent by a prisoner in a police cell in (a) 1979, (b) 1985, (c) 1990 and (d) the last year for which figures are available.

This information is not collected centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

## Tariff Scheme

**Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in re-assessing compensation for criminal injuries how long he expects average delays to be for people who were made awards under the tariff scheme. [21271]

**Mr. Maclean:** Victims who received an award under the tariff scheme will keep that award. Where any reassessed award is higher than the tariff award they will be paid the balance. If the reassessed award is lower, they will not be required to refund the difference.

I understand the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board is giving urgent attention to the reassessment of awards made under the tariff scheme. Since, in many cases, additional inquiries will need to be made into such matters as loss of earnings and receipt of social security benefits, it is likely to take several months for this process to be completed.

## Conflicts of Interest

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions during the last

five years *(a)* civil servants and *(b)* special advisers in his Department, or its agencies have declared conflicts of interest; and how many instructions have been issued about their retention, disposal or management. [21387]

**Mr. Howard:** No central comprehensive record is kept of interests or holdings which are declared by civil servants in accordance with the rules on conduct and no special adviser has declared a conflict of interest in the past five years. There is a requirement on all staff, including special advisers, to report any holdings of shares or securities, or any other business interests, where a conflict of interest might arise. General advice about this is given in standing staff instructions and is updated from time to time. This is supplemented by local advice as necessary.

### Hospitality

**Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much was spent on official hospitality by his Department in 1994–95. [21204]

**Mr. Howard:** The provisional figure for expenditure on official hospitality by my Department, including its executive agencies, in 1994–95 is £48,293.

### Criminal Injuries Compensation

**Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to publish his Bill to cut criminal injuries compensation. [21270]

**Mr. Maclean:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to her on 26 April, *Official Report*, column 561.

### Civil Service Appointments

**Mr. Ainger:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many civil service appointments were made to administrative assistant and administrative officer posts in his Department and the agencies for which he is accountable in each quarter from September 1993 until 1995. [21766]

**Mr. Howard:** The information is as follows:

*Details of appointments made at administrative assistant and administrative officer level between 1 September 1993 and 30 April 1995*

| | 1/9/93–30/11/93 | | 1/12/93–28/2/94 | | 1/3/94–31/5/94 | | 1/6/94–31/8/94 | | 1/9/94–30/11/94 | | 1/12/94–28/2/95 | | 1/3/95–30/4/95 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | AA | AO | AA | AO | AA | AO | AA | AO | AA | AO | AA | AO | AA | AO | Total number |
| Home Office excluding Prison Service | 63 | 13 | 67 | 14 | 28 | 12 | 52 | 11 | 51 | 6 | [1]373 | 5 | [1]103 | 8 | 806 |
| Prison Service | 52 | 31 | 31 | 16 | 25 | 15 | 29 | 8 | 25 | 23 | 19 | 17 | 23 | 10 | 324 |
| Total | 115 | 44 | 98 | 30 | 53 | 27 | 81 | 19 | 76 | 29 | 392 | 22 | 126 | 18 | 1,130 |

[1]The significant increase in staff recruited at AA level during these periods is due to a large number of part-year appointments made by the UK Passport Agency to cover seasonal demands for passports. The majority of these appointments have been made at regional passport offices.

### Police (Languages)

**Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate he has made of the proportion of police men and police women currently serving in Wales who speak *(a)* Welsh, *(b)* Urdu and *(c)* Punjabi; and if he will make a statement. [20922]

**Mr. Maclean:** No such estimate has been made.

### Mr. Raghbir Singh Johal

**Mr. David Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received over the case of Mr. Raghbir Singh Johal; how many replies have been sent to those writing to him; and how many officials in his Department are involved in writing or drafting replies *(a)* to members of the general public and *(b)* to hon. Members. [21890]

**Mr. Nicholas Baker:** Eighteen letters have been received from hon. Members and over 1,000 from members of the public. A proportion of the time of four officials of the Immigration and Nationality Department is devoted to the preparation of replies.

### Temazepam

**Mr. McMaster:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the answer of 21 April, *Official Report*, column *309*, what assessment he has made of the reasons why the quantity of the drug temazepam exported in the 1994 calendar year exceeds the amount produced domestically in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement. [22042]

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** Total figures for the amount of temazepam manufactured and exported during 1994 are not yet available. During 1993, however, exports did exceed the amount produced domestically. Temazepam is not only manufactured in the United Kingdom but is also imported in significant quantities to meet with legitimate demands, including export orders.

**Mr. McMaster:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the answer of 21 April, *Official Report*, column *309*, what is his latest estimate of the amount of temazepam retained each year for the last five years as manufacturers' stocks, in kilograms and prescription units, ending at the close of the 1994 calendar year; and if he will make a statement. [22043]

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** Total figures for the amount of temazepam held as manufacturers' stocks in 1994 are not yet available. The amounts for the previous five years were as follows:

| *Year* | *Amount (kg)* |
|---|---|
| 1989 | 2,284 |
| 1990 | 2,226 |
| 1991 | 3,006 |
| 1992 | 3,978 |
| 1993 | 923 |

As the drug is prescribed in varying quantities and formulations it is not possible to convert the amount of base material available in a meaningful number of prescription units.

### Racial Discrimination

**Mr. Nigel Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the Government submitted to the United Nations its latest periodic report under the convention on the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination. [22374]

**Mr. Nicholas Baker:** The United Kingdom's thirteenth report under the convention on the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination was submitted to the United Nations on 21 April 1995. Copies of the report have been placed in the Library.

### Boundary Commission

**Mr. Channon:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he proposes to announce his conclusions regarding the Boundary Commission for England in respect of changes to English parliamentary constituencies. [21811]

**Mr. Nicholas Baker:** My right hon. and learned Friend received the fourth periodical report of the Parliamentary Boundary Commission for England on 12 April. He is required by the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1983 to lay the report before Parliament as soon as may be, together with a draft Order in Council for giving effect to the Commission's recommendations, with or without modification. He will do so as soon as he has completed his consideration of the report and its recommendations.

### National Lottery

**Mr. William Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what responsibility the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action, the Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust or the Northern Ireland Rural Community Network will have for the assessment of applications for grants from the National Lottery Charities Board. [21734]

**Mr. Nicholas Baker:** Decisions on grant applications are matters for the National Lottery Charities Board. It is for the board to decide what advice to seek on the assessment of applications.

### Crime Statistics

**Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total number of *(a)* burglaries, *(b)* drug-related offences and *(c)* drug addicts for each year from 1965 to 1980. [21144]

**Mr. Maclean:** Information on the number of burglaries, the number of persons convicted of drugs offences and the number of drug addicts being treated for their addiction is given in the table.

| *Year* | *Burglaries* | *Drug offenders (under Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 or earlier legislation)* | *[1]Drug addicts notified to the Home Office* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1965 | 251,306 | —[3] | 927 |
| 1966 | 274,278 | —[3] | 1,349 |
| 1967 | 264,518 | 4,498 | 1,683 |
| 1968 | 285,287 | 5,470 | 1,746 |
| 1969[2] | 414,894[2] | 6,158 | 1,466 |
| 1970 | 423,795 | 8,378 | 1,430 |
| 1971 | 442,275 | 10,814 | 1,549 |
| 1972 | 428,083 | 13,998 | 1,617 |
| 1973[4] | 384,035 | 14,977[4] | 1,816[4] |
| 1974 | 473,407 | 12,532 | 1,967 |
| 1975 | 515,429 | 11,846 | 1,949 |
| 1976 | 510,048 | 12,754 | 1,876 |
| 1977 | 598,421 | 12,907 | 2,016 |
| 1978 | 560,109 | 13,604 | 2,402 |
| 1979 | 544,037 | 14,339 | 2,666 |
| 1980 | 618,390 | 17,158 | 2,846 |

[1] Number of addicts receiving notifiable drugs as part of treatment.
[2] Theft Act 1968 came into force.
[3] Not separately identified.
[4] Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 came into force.

### Stolen Vehicles

**Mr. Robert Ainsworth:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 17 January, *Official Report* column *382* what was the recovery rate for stolen vehicles in 1994 *(a)* in total and *(b)* by constabulary. [21143]

**Mr. Maclean:** Provisional figures for 1994 are given in the table. Finalised data will be published in the command paper "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, 1994" later this year.

*Notifiable offences of theft of a vehicle recorded by the Police, 1994 percentage of vehicles recovered by police forces area[1]*

| *Police Force Area* | *Percentage Recovered* |
|---|---|
| Avon and Somerset | 19 |
| Bedfordshire | 62 |
| Cambridgeshire | 43 |
| Cheshire | 89 |
| Cleveland | 55 |
| Cumbria | 28 |
| Derbyshire | 62 |
| Devon and Cornwall | 85 |
| Dorset | 63 |
| Durham | 49 |
| Essex | 73 |
| Gloucestershire | 67 |
| Greater Manchester | 64 |
| Hampshire | 51 |
| Hertforshire | 68 |
| Humberside | 85 |
| Kent | 53 |
| Lancashire | 81 |
| Leicestershire | 72 |
| Lincolnshire | 82 |
| City of London | [2]124 |
| Merseyside | 73 |
| Metropolitan Police | — |
| Norfolk | 50 |
| Northamptonshire | 53 |
| Northumbria | 71 |
| North Yorkshire | 60 |
| Nottinghamshire | 61 |
| South Yorkshire | 57 |
| Staffordshire | 57 |
| Suffolk | 66 |
| Surrey | 47 |
| Susex | 50 |
| Thames Valley | 62 |
| Warwickshire | 73 |
| West Mercia | 75 |
| West Midlands | 70 |

*Notifiable offences of theft of a vehicle recorded by the Police, 1994 percentage of vehicles recovered by police forces area*[1]

| Police Force Area | Percentage Recovered |
|---|---|
| West Yorkshire | 60 |
| Wiltshire | 46 |
| Dyfed-Powys | — |
| Gwent | 61 |
| North Wales | 75 |
| South Wales | 65 |
| England and Wales | [3]55 |

[1] Provisional.[2] Vehicles recovered in 1994 may have been recorded as stolen in earlier years.
[3] Excluding the Metropolitan Police and Dyfed-Powys.

### Local Byelaws

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people in his Department are employed on proposals for new local byelaws: and what is the average length of time taken to deal with applications in each year since 1990. [21230]

**Mr. Nicholas Baker:** The equivalent of 4.25 full-time staff work on applications for the approval of local byelaws.

The Home Office receives about 20 new applications per month for the approval of byelaws. The statistics which are currently maintained on outstanding applications are not in a form which would permit the average length of time taken to deal with them to be calculated without disproportionate effort. However, the backlog of outstanding cases as at the end of March for the last five years is as follows:

March 1991: 196
March 1992: 186
March 1993: 143
March 1994: 179
March 1995: 158

Efforts are being made to tackle the backlog, which has been reduced by 25 per cent. over the last six months from a peak of 211 in October 1994. These efforts will continue.

### Asylum Seekers

**Mr. Gerrard:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people sought asylum in the United Kingdom in the last year for which figures are available; and, of these, how many *(a)* already had an immigration status within the United Kingdom, *(b)* applied for asylum within three months of their arrival in the United Kingdom, *(c)* applied for asylum within three months of the expiry of their leave to remain in the United Kingdom, *(d)* were refused asylum and *(e)* were given exceptional leave to remain. [21311]

**Mr. Nicholas Baker:** Information on asylum applications and decisions made during 1994 is given in the table.

Information on the length of time that elapses before an application for asylum is made, according to the date a person either arrives in the United Kingdom or their leave to remain in the United Kingdom expires, is not available.

*Decisions on applications for asylum*[1] *received in the United Kingdom, excluding dependants, by location of application, 1994*

| | Number of principal applicants | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Port applications | In-Country[2] Applications | Total |
| Asylum applications[3] | 10,230 | 22,600 | 32,830 |
| Total Decisions[3,4] | 6,340 | 10,805 | 20,990 |
| Recognised as a refugee and granted asylum | 300 | 530 | 825 |
| Not recognised as a refugee, but granted exceptional leave to remain[5] | 1,785 | 1,875 | 3,660 |
| Total refused[6] | — | — | 16,500 |
| Refused asylum and ELR after full consideration | 4,255 | 8,400 | 12,655 |
| Refused on safe third country grounds[6] | — | — | 865 |
| Refused under para. 340 of the Immigration Rules[6,7] | — | — | 2,985 |

[1] Provisional figures rounded to the nearest 5.[2] The majority of in-country applicants have previously been granted leave to enter the UK in some non-asylum category.
[3] Figures exclude information on applications made overseas.
[4] Decisions do not necessarily relate to applications made in the same year.
[5] Usually granted for a year in the first instance, subject then to further review.
[6] Refusals on safe third country grounds, and refusals under para. 340 are not available split between port and in-country applications.
[7] Para. 180F prior to 1 October 1994, for failure to provide evidence to support the asylum claim within a reasonable period.

**Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what amount of legal aid was granted to rejected asylum seekers to pursue their appeals in each year since 1990 and in the first three months of 1995. [20763]

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** I have been asked to reply.

The Legal Aid Board does not record separately the cost of providing advice and assistance to asylum seekers in pursuit of their appeals to the Immigration appeals tribunal. It is therefore not possible to distinguish the cost of those cases from other cases involving immigration and nationality matters.

**Dr. Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many rejected asylum seekers pursued their appeals *(a)* with and *(b)* without the benefit of legal representation in 1994 and in the first three months of 1995. [20762]

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** I have been asked to reply.

Detailed information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. In the cases heard since the beginning of 1994, the large majority of appellants have been represented.

### Computer Pornography

**Mr. Timms:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what steps are being taken to monitor the use of Internet and other electronic networks for obscene material relating to children; [21188]

(2) what consultations have taken place between his Department and the Association of Chief Police Officers for drawing up a national police strategy to deal with computer pornography on the Internet. [21185]

**Mr. Maclean:** Monitoring by the police of the Internet and other electronic networks for child pornography is an operational matter for chief officers.

The recently established inter-departmental working group on obscenity, which includes a police representative, is currently examining the problem of child and computer pornography, including the adequacy and effectiveness of the relevant law and its enforcement. This work will be complemented by that of the Association of Chief Police Officers working group on computer pornography which has been established to offer guidance on training and investigation techniques.

**Mr. Timms:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions have been brought under section 43 of the Telecommunications Act 1984 for the distribution of obscene material between computers using telephone lines within the United Kingdom. [21186]

**Mr. Nicholas Baker:** It is not possible from the information held centrally to identify offences under section 43(1) (a) of the Telecommunications Act 1984—the sending, by means of public telecommunications system, a message or other matter that is grossly offensive or of an indecent, obscene or menacing character—from other summary offences under the same Act. However, our statistics show that in 1993, the latest available, there were 1,147 prosecutions and 725 convictions for summary offences as a whole under the aforesaid Act.

### Mr. Nick Leeson

**Mr. MacShane:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what moves he is making to secure the extradition of Mr. Nick Leeson to the United Kingdom. [21178]

**Mr. Nicholas Baker:** The Director of the Serious Fraud Office has commenced an inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the failure of Barings bank. The question of extradition does not arise until the Serious Fraud Office has decided whether it is appropriate to prosecute the person concerned.

### Public Bodies

**Dr. Wright:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which of the executive non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department publish *(a)* annual reports, *(b)* annual accounts, *(c)* the minutes of meetings, *(d)* the agendas of meetings and *(e)* registers of members' interests; and whether in each case this is (i) under a statutory requirement or (ii) voluntary. [20499]

**Mr. Howard:** The following is the information:

*(a) Publication of annual reports*

Alcohol Education and Research Council (statutory)
Commission for Racial Equality (statutory)
Community Development Foundation (voluntary)
Gaming Board for Great Britain (statutory)
Horserace Betting Levy Board (statutory)
Horserace Totalisator Board (statutory)
National Lottery Charities Board (statutory)
Office of the Data Protection Registrar (statutory)
Police Complaints Authority (statutory)

*(b) Publication of annual accounts*

Alcohol Education and Research Council (statutory)
Commission for Racial Equality (statutory)
Community Development Foundation (voluntary)
Gaming Board for Great Britain (voluntary)
Horserace Betting Levy Board (statutory)
Horserace Totalisator Board (statutory)
National Lottery Charities Board (statutory)
Office of the Data Protection Registrar (statutory)
Police Complaints Authority (statutory)

*(c) Publication of the minutes of meetings*

Community Development Foundation (voluntary)
Fire Services Examinations Board (voluntary)
In addition, the Commission for Racial Equality keeps copies of the Commissioners' monthly meetings, which are available to the public.

*(d) Publication of the agendas of meetings*

Community Development Foundation (voluntary)
Fire Services Examination Board (voluntary)
In addition, the Commission for Racial Equality keeps copies of the Commissioners' monthly meetings, which are available to the public.

*(e) Publication of registers of members' interests*

None, although details of members interests are sometimes given in NDPB annual reports.

**Dr. Wright:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the executive non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department which are subject to *(a)* investigation by the Parliamentary Commissioner, *(b)* scrutiny by the Audit Commission, *(c)* scrutiny by the National Audit Office, *(d)* statutory provisions for open government, *(e)* performance indicators and *(f)* provisions under the citizens charter. [20659]

**Mr. Howard:** The executive non-departmental public bodies sponsored by the Home Office are as follows:

Alcohol Education and Research Council
Commission for Racial Equality
Community Development Foundation
Fire Services Examination Board
Gaming Board for Great Britain
Horserace Betting Levy Board
Horserace Totalisator Board
National Lottery Charities Board
Office of the Data Protection Registrar
Police Complaints Authority
Police Promotion Examinations Board

The readily available information on these bodies is as follows:

*(a) Investigation by the Parliamentary Commissioner*

The Commission for Racial Equality, the Horserace Betting Levy Board and the Office of the Data Protection Registrar are listed in Schedule 2 to the Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1967 (as amended) as among those bodies subject to investigation by the PCA.

*(b) Scrutiny by the Audit Commission*

The Audit Commission only has responsibility for *local* government.

*(c) Scrutiny by the National Audit Office*

The following bodies are subject to NAO scrutiny either by statute or by agreement:

Community Development Foundation
Commission for Racial Equality
Gaming Board
National Lottery Charities Board
Office of the Data Protection Registrar
Police Complaints Authority

*(d) Statutory provisions for Open Government*

There are no statutory provisions at present on Open Government which apply to my Department's NDPBs but those which are subject to scrutiny by the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration are also subject to the Code of Practice on Open Government.

*(e) Performance Indicators*

NDPBs are encouraged, wherever appropriate, to develop performance indicators and associated targets and to publish these.

*(f) Provisions under the Citizens Charter*

Not all the Home Office's executive NDPBs offer a service to the public but those that do are encouraged to adopt the principles set out in the citizens charter and to publicise how these are being reflected in their working arrangements. This has led to a statement of charter standards by the Commission for Racial Equality and the publication of customer service targets by the Gaming Board in its annual report.

## Prison Population

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the current prison population; and what were the figures for each of the previous four years. [20744]

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

*Letter from Richard Tilt to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 1 May 1995:*

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about the current prison population; and for the figures for each of the previous four years.

On 24 April the prison population of England and Wales was 50,659, of whom 365 were held in police cells. The average prison populations for the previous four years are shown in the table below.

| *Year* | *Number held in prison service establishments* | *Number held in police cells* | *Total* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1994 | 48,622 | 173 | 48,795 |
| 1993 | 44,552 | 14 | 44,566 |
| 1992 | 44,720 | 1,098 | 45,818 |
| 1991 | 44,809 | 1,088 | 45,897 |

## Immigration

**Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many applications for leave to remain in the United Kingdom made by non-United Kingdom citizens on the basis of a same-sex relationship with a citizen of the United Kingdom have been *(a)* accepted and *(b)* rejected since 1990; [20771]

(2) how many applications for leave to remain in the United Kingdom made by non-United Kingdom citizens on the basis of marriage to a citizen of the United Kingdom have been *(a)* accepted and *(b)* rejected since 1990; [20773]

(3) how many applications for leave to remain in the United Kingdom made by non-United Kingdom citizens on the basis of a heterosexual common law relationship with a citizen of the United Kingdom have been *(a)* accepted and *(b)* rejected since 1990. [20772]

**Mr. Nicholas Baker:** The available information is given in the table and relates to persons accepted for settlement, after completing a probationary year, on the basis of marriage to a British citizen or other person already settled here. It excludes those persons accepted for settlement at the same time as their non-British citizen spouse is accepted.

Also given are those accepted for settlement on the basis of a heterosexual common-law relationship and those refused settlement following marriage but the nationality of the settled partner of such persons is not recorded centrally.

No information is available on the outcome of applications to remain on the basis of a same-sex relationship.

*Acceptances for settlement, and refusals, on the basis of marriage or a heterosexual common-law relationship, 1990 to 1994*

| | *Accepted for settlement[1] married to a:* | | | *Refused settlement after marriage[1,2]* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *British citizen* | *Other national* | *Common-law spouse* | |
| 1990 | 19,620 | 4,190 | 190 | 270 |
| 1991 | 23,270 | 3,840 | 340 | 350 |
| 1992 | 22,550 | 3,530 | 300 | 520 |
| 1993 | 24,120 | 3,060 | 430 | 630 |
| 1994[3] | 23,280 | 2,790 | 510 | 780 |

[1]At the end of a 12-month period following the marriage or the admission as a spouse.

[2]Includes some common-law applications.

[3]Provisional figures.

## Prisoners

**Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average time taken for a prison area manager to reply to an appeal that has been made by a prison inmate against a decision that has been made by a prison governor; and if he will make a statement. [20743]

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

*Letter from B. Landers to Mr. Tom Cox, dated 1 May 1995:*

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to your recent Question about the average time taken for a prison area manager to reply to an appeal that has been made by a prisoner against a decision made by a prison governor.

The information requested is not readily available and can be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Area offices are set a target date of six weeks, from date of receipt, to answer requests and complaints from prisoners. Between 1 April 1994 and 31 March 1995, 85% of requests and complaints were answered within this set target. This figure represents an improvement on the figure for 1993–94, when 82% of requests/complaints were answered within the set target and for 1992–93, when the figure was 61%.

## Prisoners, Wales

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the current prison population in Wales; and what were the figures for each of the previous four years. [20774]

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

*Letter from Richard Tilt to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 1 May 1995:*

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about the current prison population in Wales; and for the figures for each of the previous four years.

On 24 April the number of prisoners being held in Prison Service establishments in Wales was 853. The average populations of establishments in Wales for the previous four years are shown in the table below. The prisoners will not necessarily have been sentenced or committed by Welsh courts nor have committed their offences in Wales.

| *Year* | *Number held in Prison Service establishments* | *Number held in police cells* | *[1]Total* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1994 | 862 | — | 862 |
| 1993 | 859 | — | 859 |
| 1992 | 879 | 75 | 954 |
| 1991 | 873 | 91 | 964 |

[1] May not equal the sum of the components because of rounding.

## Prisoners (Drugs)

**Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the existing resources in prisons in England and Wales to encourage prisoners *(a)* to come off and *(b)* to remain off drugs. [19952]

**Mr. Maclean:** Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

*Letter from Richard Tilt to Mr. Tox Cox, dated 1 May 1995:*

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question on the existing resources available in prisons in England and Wales to encourage prisoners to come off and remain off drugs.

The Prison Service has identified the reduction of drug misuse in prisons as a strategic priority. All Prison Service establishments provide access to detoxification, education and counselling facilities to prisoners with drug misuse problems through the health care centre, probation department or community drug agencies.

The new Prison Service drug strategy will greatly increase the provision of drug treatment programmes by grouping the supply of rehabilitation programmes across several adjacent prisons. Work is already proceeding on developing the most effective treatment programmes by providing additional funding to 13 establishments in the next six months to be followed by a rolling implementation over the next three years.

The only data currently available are aggregated from a survey of 130 prisons conducted during December 1994 which showed that 119 prisons provide some form of drug treatment programme. The programmes fall into three main types: individual counselling, group therapy and intensive treatment programmes. At the time of the survey a total of 9 prisons were offering intensive rehabilitation, while 94 offered group treatment programmes and 102 offered individual counselling. A further survey into the details of detoxification treatments in prisons is planned for May.

## Burglary, Hastings

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what have been the results to date of the inquiries made by the East Sussex police force in respect of the burglary in January at the headquarters of the Hastings archaeological research group; and if he will make a statement.

**Mr. Maclean:** I understand from Sussex police that extensive inquiries have been made into the burglary that took place in January. However, the property stolen has not been recovered and no arrests have yet been made.

## SOCIAL SECURITY

### War Pensioners

11. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to improve the financial position of war pensioners and those widowed as a result of wartime action to coincide with the 50th anniversary of VE day. [20129]

**Mr. Lilley:** I recently announced that war widows pension would be restored to war widows who remarried but were subsequently widowed, divorced or legally separated.

**Mr. Denham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many war widows are currently in receipt of a war widow's pension; and how many he estimates would be in receipt of such a pension if they had not remarried. [20127]

**Mr. Arbuthnot:** At 31 March 1995, 48,405 widows were in receipt of a war widows's pension.

We estimate that a further 45,000 widows would still be in receipt of a war widow's pension had they not remarried.

### Social Security Reforms

14. **Sir Michael Neubert**: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what will be the long-term effect on public spending of the social security reforms he has announced so far. [20133]

**Mr. Lilley:** The major reforms announced so far, particularly incapacity benefit and job seeker's allowance, will reduce projected expenditure by £4 billion a year by the end of the century.

In the next century, once the reforms contained in the Pensions Bill currently before this House have worked through, total savings will be £14 billion a year.

### Pensioners (Benefits Claims)

15. **Mr. Gerrard:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his latest estimate of the number of pensioners who are entitled to but are not claiming *(a)* income support and *(b)* housing benefit; and if he will estimate the total amount that is not claimed. [20134]

**Mr. Roger Evans:** The latest estimates indicate that in 1992, between 480,000 and 860,000 pensioners may not take up entitlement to income support, worth up to a maximum of £610 million or 30 per cent. of available benefit. The comparable figures for housing benefit are between 260,000 and 340,000 and unclaimed benefit worth up to £300 million or 10 per cent. of available benefit.

### Bronchitis and Emphysema

16. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the current success rate of applicants for special assistance for those suffering from chronic bronchitis and emphysema. [20135]

**Mr. Hague:** Of the 42,770 claims for industrial injuries disablement benefit in respect of chronic bronchitis and emphysema processed by 28 February, 4,792 have resulted in awards of benefit, representing a success rate of 11.2 per cent. This is a similar success rate to claims for other prescribed diseases.

### Child Support Agency

17. **Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what evidence there is that the Child Support Agency is now coping efficiently with its work load. [20136]

**Mr. Burt:** The agency is showing an improvement in a number of areas. This year it has completed 528,400 cases compared with 336,200 last year, and has completed almost twice as many second tier reviews. As a result, the agency expects to collect more than £70 million compared with £13.1 million last year.

19. **Mr. Clifton-Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average length of time the Child Support Agency takes to make an assessment; and thereafter in what period those assessed have to make a payment. [20138]

**Mr. Burt:** The length of time taken to complete an assessment is variable as it depends on the receipt of information from various sources. Once the Agency has all the information it needs, it is currently taking 123 days to complete an assessment. Where no payment is received within 14 days from notification of the maintenance assessment, the agency can consider enforcement action.

### Benefits Expenditure

18. **Sir Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the total expenditure of social security benefits in *(a)* the current financial year, *(b)* five years ago and *(c)* 10 years ago. [20137]

**Mr. Arbuthnot:** The figures[1] are in the table:

| *Financial year* | *Benefit expenditure (£ million cash)* |
|---|---|
| 1994–95 | [2]85,221 |
| 1989–90 | 50,174 |
| 1984–85 | 38,250 |

[1] Figures have been taken from the 1995 Social Security departmental report and an earlier equivalent.
[2] Estimated outturn.

### Disabled People

20. **Mr. Peter Ainsworth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what measures the Government are taking to help disabled people. [20139]

**Mr. Hague:** The Government's plans for ending discrimination against disabled people were set out fully in the White Paper published on 12 January. These include new initiatives in education and transport, in addition to the measures in the Disability Discrimination Bill for new rights in employment and access to goods and services and the establishment of a National Disability Council. These proposals, which are clear, flexible and fair, have received widespread support.

### Benefit Payment Cards

21. **Dr. Spink:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to bring in an identity card system for benefit claimants. [20140]

**Mr. Arbuthnot:** Starting next year, we are planning to introduce benefit payment cards to replace order books and giros for people who choose to collect their benefits at

the post office. These cards will allow access to payment information which will be held electronically on a database; they are not designed as identity cards. People who choose to receive their benefits directly into their bank or building society by automated credit transfer will not hold a benefit payment card.

### Jobseeker's Allowance

22. **Mr. Jim Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received expressing fears that the restrictions to 16 hours per week for study in the proposed jobseeker's allowance will affect people's ability to acquire new skills for the labour market. [20141]

**Mr. Roger Evans:** I have received a number of representations from hon. Members on behalf of their constituents and from some colleges. In each case, I have been able to assure them that the changes that we are proposing to introduce are designed to eliminate anomalies in the current rules and to allow the same number of people to study part time and claim jobseeker's allowance as do so under the current arrangements.

### Habitual Residence Test

23. **Ms Glenda Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many British citizens, appealing against the habitual residence test, have been awarded social fund loans. [20142]

**Mr. Roger Evans:** The information is not available.

### Child Benefits

24. **Mr. Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will propose that child benefits should be renamed child cash allowances, that the cost should be deducted in national accounts from taxes received by the Exchequer and that the levels should be decided by the Chancellor in common with personal tax allowances. [20143]

**Mr. Burt:** No. Child benefit is proper to this Department's vote and will continue to be treated in national accounts in the same way as all other social security benefits.

### Unemployed People (Benefit Costs)

25. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his latest estimate of the total cost in benefits to those registered as unemployed in Britain at the latest available date. [20144]

**Mr. Roger Evans:** The latest estimate of benefit expenditure on unemployed people for the year April 1994 to March 1995 is £9,100 million. The amount includes unemployment benefit, income support, housing benefit, council tax and social fund payments but not child benefit or family credit. This information is shown in table 5 of the Social Security Departmental Report, Cm. 2813, which is in the Library.

### Benefit Income Levels

26. **Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security by what percentage the income of people living on benefits has changed in real terms since 1979. [20145]

**Mr. Burt:** Most family types receiving income support have seen a real terms rise in their benefit rates since 1979, the level of change depending on family size and composition. For example, the benefit rates for a typical unemployed couple with two children are now 24 per cent. higher in real terms than in 1979. During the same period, the income support rates of typical pensioner couple both aged between 65 and 70 have risen by 18 per cent. in real terms.

### National Insurance Contributions

**Mr. Dewar:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 13 December 1994, *Official Report*, column *630*, on the cost of reintroducing the earnings link for uprating retirement pensions and linked benefits on the basis of the assumptions used in that answer, if he will estimate the effect on national insurance contributions rates in the years form 1997–98 to 2006–7. [20974]

**Mr. Arbuthnot:** The table shows the estimated combined increase in the main class 1 contribution rates paid by employers and employees which would be needed to raise the additional revenue to cover the extra cost of retirement pensions and other linked benefits.

| *Year* | *Increase in combined rate of employer and employee contributions (per cent.)* |
|---|---|
| 1997–98 | 0.2 |
| 1998–99 | 0.4 |
| 1999–00 | 0.6 |
| 2000–01 | 0.8 |
| 2001–02 | 1.0 |
| 2002–03 | 1.2 |
| 2003–04 | 1.4 |
| 2004–05 | 1.6 |
| 2005–06 | 1.8 |
| 2006–07 | 2.1 |

*Source:*
Government Actuary's Department.

### Retirement Pensions

**Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the savings made by paying pensions from the Monday following claimants' relevant birthdays or date of retirement. [20815]

**Mr. Arbuthnot:** The estimated cost of paying retirement pension for the part-week preceding the first pension pay day is £7 million at 1995–96 price levels. An equivalent amount would be saved if payment were to cease at the date of death instead of, as now, the end of the pension pay week.

To amend current payment procedures to provide for the changes outlined above would involve an additional clerical cost in the region of £2.5 million per year.

### Incapacity Benefit

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to monitor the introduction of incapacity benefit and to report his findings to the House. [20118]

**Mr. Hague:** All aspects of incapacity benefit will be closely monitored.

### Mortgage Interest

**Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what discussions he has had with the Council of Mortgage Lenders regarding changes to income support payments for mortgage interest. [20131]

**Mr. Roger Evans:** We have had discussions with the Council of Mortgage Lenders throughout the consultation period and will continue to do so.

### Residential Care

**Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people receive full or part payment of their care in nursing homes out of public funds; at what cost; and if he will make a statement. [20374]

**Mr. Roger Evans:** The latest figures, for November 1994, show that 84,000 people in nursing homes have preserved rights to the old system of income support limits. In addition, a total of 80,000 people have income support which includes residential allowance, meaning that they have been placed in nursing homes or residential care homes under the community care scheme. For these cases, it is not possible to distinguish nursing home residents from those in residential care homes.

Costings are not available for November 1994. The cost of income support for residents in nursing homes in the financial year 1993–94 was £1,280 million under the old system and the total cost for residential allowance cases was £67 million.

Currently around 280,000 people receive help through income support with residential care and nursing home fees at a cost of over £2 billion compared to 12,000 in 1979 at a cost of £10 million.

Source: Income Support Statistics May 1993–February 1994 and November 1994.

### Market Testing

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the cost of employing consultants in connection with market testing programmes in which his Department has been engaged since their inception. [21376]

**Mr. Hague:** The cost of external consultancy support for the Department's market testing programmes in the period of April 1992 to 31 March 1995 is estimated as £5,551,000.

### Income Support Deductions

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many recipients of income support in each region and as a percentage of the total had deductions made from their benefit for *(a)* poll tax arrears, *(b)* fuel bills and *(c)* social fund loan repayments in each year since 1990; and what was the total annual cash value in each category. [21287]

**Mr. Roger Evans:** The information is set out in the table.

| | | *Claimants with deductions for:* | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | *(a) Community charge* | | | *[1](b) Fuel* | | | *[2](c) Social Fund* | | |
| | *All claimants* | *Number* | *Per cent.* | *Estimated annual cash value £* | *Number* | *Per cent.* | *Estimated annual cash value £* | *Number* | *Per cent.* | *Estimated annual cash value £* |
| *1990* | | | | | | | | | | |
| Great Britain | 4,180,000 | 8,000 | 0.2 | 2,600,000 | 183,000 | 4.4 | 105,100,000 | 383,000 | 9.2 | 106,900,000 |
| North Eastern | 674,000 | 3,000 | 0.4 | 800,000 | 41,000 | 6.1 | 25,500,000 | 72,000 | 10.7 | 18,500,000 |
| London North | 638,000 | 2,000 | 0.3 | 600,000 | 22,000 | 3.4 | 12,400,000 | 40,000 | 6.3 | 12,700,000 |
| South Western | 274,000 | — | — | — | 7,000 | 2.6 | 4,500,000 | 17,000 | 6.2 | 4,900,000 |
| Wales | 248,000 | — | — | 100,000 | 10,000 | 4.0 | 5,200,000 | 24,000 | 9.7 | 6,900,000 |
| Midlands | 665,000 | 1,000 | 0.2 | 300,000 | 13,000 | 2.0 | 7,000,000 | 54,000 | 8.1 | 16,000,000 |
| North Western | 643,000 | 1,000 | 0.2 | 200,000 | 25,000 | 3.9 | 14,300,000 | 65,000 | 10.1 | 17,200,000 |
| Scotland | 481,000 | — | — | — | 47,000 | 9.8 | 26,400,000 | 75,000 | 15.6 | 19,300,000 |
| London South | 558,000 | 2,000 | 0.4 | 500,000 | 17,000 | 3.0 | 9,800,000 | 36,000 | 6.5 | 11,400,000 |
| *1991* | | | | | | | | | | |
| Great Britain | 4,487,000 | 34,000 | 0.8 | 3,600,000 | 200,000 | 4.5 | 119,800,000 | 443,000 | 9.9 | 127,400,000 |
| North Eastern | 688,000 | 7,000 | 1.0 | 700,000 | 47,000 | 6.8 | 32,200,000 | 78,000 | 11.3 | 21,100,000 |
| London North | 735,000 | 2,000 | 0.3 | 200,000 | 21,000 | 2.9 | 11,500,000 | 44,000 | 6.0 | 14,700,000 |
| South Western | 310,000 | 1,000 | 0.3 | 100,000 | 7,000 | 2.3 | 4,300,000 | 20,000 | 6.5 | 5,800,000 |
| Wales | 257,000 | 3,000 | 1.2 | 300,000 | 13,000 | 5.1 | 6,800,000 | 26,000 | 10.1 | 7,000,000 |
| Midlands | 699,000 | 2,000 | 0.3 | 200,000 | 17,000 | 2.4 | 9,000,000 | 70,000 | 10.0 | 20,600,000 |
| North Western | 669,000 | 6,000 | 0.9 | 700,000 | 33,000 | 4.9 | 19,000,000 | 79,000 | 11.8 | 22,000,000 |
| Scotland | 487,000 | 13,000 | 2.7 | 1,400,000 | 43,000 | 8.8 | 25,200,000 | 84,000 | 17.2 | 22,600,000 |
| London South | 641,000 | 1,000 | 0.2 | 100,000 | 20,000 | 3.1 | 11,800,000 | 42,000 | 6.6 | 13,600,000 |
| *1992* | | | | | | | | | | |
| Great Britain | 5,088,000 | 243,000 | 4.8 | 28,500,000 | 243,000 | 4.8 | 145,400,000 | 586,000 | 11.5 | 175,600,000 |
| North Eastern | 753,000 | 50,000 | 6.6 | 5,800,000 | 57,000 | 7.6 | 39,400,000 | 103,000 | 13.7 | 28,300,000 |
| London North | 891,000 | 25,000 | 2.8 | 3,100,000 | 31,000 | 3.5 | 17,700,000 | 73,000 | 8.2 | 25,200,000 |
| South Western | 357,000 | 16,000 | 4.5 | 1,900,000 | 10,000 | 2.8 | 5,700,000 | 32,000 | 9.0 | 9,400,000 |
| Wales | 287,000 | 17,000 | 5.9 | 2,000,000 | 17,000 | 5.9 | 9,000,000 | 34,000 | 11.8 | 10,000,000 |
| Midlands | 800,000 | 36,000 | 4.5 | 4,100,000 | 23,000 | 2.9 | 11,800,000 | 90,000 | 11.3 | 27,700,000 |
| North Western | 731,000 | 44,000 | 6.0 | 5,100,000 | 39,000 | 5.3 | 21,400,000 | 100,000 | 13.7 | 27,900,000 |
| Scotland | 519,000 | 42,000 | 8.1 | 4,800,000 | 42,000 | 8.1 | 25,600,000 | 94,000 | 18.1 | 27,400,000 |
| London South | 749,000 | 14,000 | 1.9 | 1,700,000 | 24,000 | 3.2 | 14,700,000 | 59,000 | 7.9 | 19,700,000 |
| *1993* | | | | | | | | | | |
| Great Britain | 5,643,000 | 438,000 | 7.8 | 51,900,000 | 246,000 | 4.4 | 139,400,000 | — | — | — |
| North Eastern | 827,000 | 82,000 | 9.9 | 9,600,000 | 53,000 | 6.4 | 33,600,000 | — | — | — |

| | All claimants | Claimants with deductions for: (a) Community charge Number | Per cent. | Estimated annual cash value £ | [1](b) Fuel Number | Per cent. | Estimated annual cash value £ | [2](c) Social Fund Number | Per cent. | Estimated annual cash value £ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| London North | 992,000 | 54,000 | 5.4 | 6,500,000 | 35,000 | 3.5 | 19,200,000 | — | — | — |
| South Western | 404,000 | 32,000 | 7.9 | 3,900,000 | 10,000 | 2.5 | 5,500,000 | — | — | — |
| Wales | 305,000 | 26,000 | 8.5 | 3,100,000 | 14,000 | 4.6 | 7,500,000 | — | — | — |
| Midlands | 888,000 | 74,000 | 8.3 | 8,900,000 | 31,000 | 3.5 | 15,800,000 | — | — | — |
| North Western | 799,000 | 91,000 | 11.4 | 10,600,000 | 39,000 | 4.9 | 21,400,000 | — | — | — |
| Scotland | 543,000 | 43,000 | 7.9 | 4,900,000 | 37,000 | 6.8 | 21,700,000 | — | — | — |
| London South | 886,000 | 35,000 | 4.0 | 4,300,000 | 27,000 | 3.0 | 14,600,000 | — | — | — |
| *1994* | | | | | | | | | | |
| Great Britain | 5,675,000 | 523,000 | 9.2 | 64,300,000 | 271,000 | 4.8 | 156,900,000 | 665,000 | 11.7 | 214,700,000 |
| North Eastern | 832,000 | 92,000 | 11.1 | 11,200,000 | 57,000 | 6.9 | 37,600,000 | 113,000 | 13.6 | 34,000,000 |
| London North | 1,000,000 | 78,000 | 7.8 | 9,700,000 | 37,000 | 3.7 | 20,800,000 | 92,000 | 9.2 | 32,800,000 |
| South Western | 399,000 | 39,000 | 9.8 | 4,900,000 | 10,000 | 2.5 | 5,800,000 | 40,000 | 10.0 | 12,400,000 |
| Wales | 312,000 | 23,000 | 7.4 | 2,900,000 | 14,000 | 4.5 | 7,700,000 | 36,000 | 11.5 | 11,700,000 |
| Midlands | 893,000 | 89,000 | 10.0 | 11,000,000 | 38,000 | 4.3 | 19,700,000 | 103,000 | 11.5 | 32,800,000 |
| North Western | 801,000 | 101,000 | 12.6 | 12,300,000 | 46,000 | 5.7 | 26,300,000 | 109,000 | 13.6 | 33,000,000 |
| Scotland | 550,000 | 48,000 | 8.7 | 5,700,000 | 39,000 | 7.1 | 23,000,000 | 95,000 | 17.3 | 31,800,000 |
| London South | 887,000 | 53,000 | 6.0 | 6,700,000 | 30,000 | 3.4 | 16,000,000 | 78,000 | 8.8 | 26,200,000 |

[1] "Fuel" includes deductions fro gas and/or electricity.
[2] Data not available for May 1993.

*Notes:*
1. All figures are rounded to the nearest thousand and percentages to one decimal place.
2. Estimated cash value is based on the number of claimants and average weekly deductions in the enquiry week for each category (multiplied by 52).
3. DSS Administrative Regions.

*Source:*
Income Support Statistics Annual Enquiry May 1990–93, Quarterly Statistical Enquiry May 1994.

## Hospitality

**Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much was spent on official hospitality by his Department in 1994–95. [21202]

**Mr. Hague:** Expenditure information for the 1994–95 financial year has not yet been finalised, but on present information the total amount spent on hospitality in that year by the Department of Social Security was £127,839.

## Conflicts of Interest

**Mr. Milburn :** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security on how many occasions during the last five years *(a)* civil servants and *(b)* special advisers in his Department or its agencies have declared conflicts of interest; and how many instructions have been issued about their retention, disposal or management. [21397]

**Mr. Hague:** In the Department and agencies for which I am responsible, any conflict of interest involving a civil servant would have been dealt in accordance with established guidance. Comprehensive records are not held centrally.

There have been no reports of special advisers declaring conflicts of interest in the last five years.

## Civil Servants

**Mr. Ainger:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many civil service appointments were made to administrative assistant and administrative officer posts in his Department and the agencies for which he is accountable in each quarter from September 1993 until April 1995. [21773]

**Mr. Hague:** The information is in the table:

| Quarter | Administrative assistant | Administrative officer |
|---|---|---|
| 1 October 1993–31 December 1993 | 2,182 | 1,243 |
| 1 January 1994–31 March 1994 | 2,462 | 900 |
| 1 April 1994–30 June 1994 | 3,053 | 1,346 |
| 1 July 1994–30 September 1994 | 3,423 | 1,662 |
| 1 October 1994–31 December 1994 | 2,936 | 1,068 |
| 1 January 1995–31 March 1995 | 3,421 | 963 |

*Note:*
The figures include staff recruited on a permanent, casual or fixed-term contract basis plus those reinstated or transferred from other government departments.

## Personal Pensions

**Mr. Ingram:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the number of people paying contributions to a personal pension scheme in each year since 1988 under the categories *(a)* self-employed contributors, *(b)* employed contributors not contracted-out of the state earnings-related pension scheme; *(c)* employed contributors contracted-out of SERPS, receiving DSS rebate only contributions to the scheme and *(d)* employed contributors, contracted-out of SERPS making personal payments in addition to DSS rebates. [21839]

**Mr. Arbuthnot:** The information on employees' personal pensions is in the table. I shall let the hon. Member have a reply on the number of self-employed contributors to personal pensions as soon as possible.

| Type of scheme | 1988–89 | 1989–90 | 1990–91 | 1991–92 | 1992–93 | [1]1993–94 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| PP with employee contributions[2] | 350 | 1,050 | 1,600 | 2,150 | 2,500 | 2,500 |

| Type of scheme | 1988–89 | 1989–90 | 1990–91 | 1991–92 | 1992–93 | [1]1993–94 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| APP based on minimum contributions[3] only | 850 | 2,450 | 2,750 | 3,050 | 3,050 | 2,900 |
| APP with employee contributions | 500 | 1,500 | 1,900 | 2,100 | 2,550 | 2,650 |

[1] Provisional.

[2] The figures for PP's with employee contributions show the number of PP arrangements—this will include a number of people who also have an APP or have more than one PP. It will also include a small number of APP's and PP's where the employee pays no additional contributions but the employer does.

[3] Minimum contributions include the National Insurance rebate and any incentives or additions. Tax relief on the employee's share of the minimum contributions is also payable.

*Note:*

PP means a personal pension not contracted out of SERPS.

APP means an appropriate personal pension contracted out of SERPS.

*Source:*

Inland Revenue aggregate tax returns from all personal pension providers.

## WALES

### Animal Diseases

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many cases of tuberculosis in cattle were reported in each county in each year since 1985. [20551]

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** Complete information in the form requested is not available and information which is available for the years 1985 to 1987 could be provided only at disproportionate cost. The numbers of confirmed cattle tuberculosis breakdowns in each county of Wales in each of the years from 1988 to 1991 were as follows:

| County | Year(s) in which cases occurred | Number of herds | Number of confirmed reactors |
|---|---|---|---|
| Clwyd | 1989 | 1 | 1 |
| Dyfed | 1988 | 12 | 16 |
| | 1989 | 5 | 9 |
| | 1990 | 8 | 21 |
| | 1991 | 3 | 4 |
| West Glamorgan | 1988 | 1 | 1 |
| Gwent | 1989 | 1 | 4 |
| Powys | 1989 | 1 | 1 |

In the period 1992–1994 the numbers of confirmed cattle tuberculosis breakdowns in each of the animal health offices' administrative areas were as follows:

| Animal health office area | Year(s) in which cases occurred | Number of herds | Number of confirmed reactors |
|---|---|---|---|
| Dyfed | 1992 | 12 | 34 |
| | 1993 | 15 | 62 |
| | 1994 | 38 | 188 |
| Gwent/South, West and Mid Glamorgan | 1992 | 3 | 3 |
| | 1993 | 10 | 28 |
| | 1994 | 18 | 46 |
| Gwynedd and Clwyd | 1993 | 1 | 1 |
| Powys | 1994 | 6 | 25 |

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many cases of Teschen disease occurred in each year since 1975. [21098]

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** No cases of Teschen disease have occurred in Wales since 1975.

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many cases of African swine fever there have been in each year since 1985. [21064]

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** No cases of African swine fever have occurred in Wales since 1985.

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many cases of vesicular stomatitis occurred in each year since 1985. [21139]

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** No cases of vesicular stomatitis have occurred in Wales since 1 June 1991. This disease only became notifiable on that date and official records prior to that were not collected, although I am not aware that there has ever been a case of this disease in Great Britain.

### Lougher Estuary

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what land has been purchased on behalf of the Countryside Council for Wales in the Lougher estuary; by whom this land was purchased; for how much; and for what specific purpose this purchase has been made. [21254]

**Mr. Redwood:** A total of 29.9 hectares of land, mainly salt marsh, in the Lougher estuary near Lougher, West Glamorgan was bought from the Land Authority for Wales by the Countryside Council for Wales for a nominal sum because it was on offer and is part of the Lougher estuary site of special scientific interest.

### Cardiff Bay

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what progress has been made to date on the provision of compensation areas in respect of conservation interests lost by the Cardiff Bay Barrage proposal; and if he will make a statement. [21252]

**Mr. Redwood:** A working group comprising the Countryside Council for Wales, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the Land Authority for Wales are currently considering a report on the outcome of studies into suitable sites along the South Wales coastline between the Burry inlet and the Gwent levels.

Following advice from the working group, I expect to make an announcement about site acquisition shortly.

### Local Government Finance

**Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list *(a)* the estimated actual spending for 1994–95, *(b)* the standard spending assessment for 1995–96, *(c)* the amounts by which *(b)* exceeds or falls short of *(a)*, and *(d)* the percentage by which *(b)* exceeds or falls short of

*(a)* for (i) each district council, (ii) each county council and (iii) Wales; and if he will make a statement. [20376]

**Mr. Redwood:** Information on 1994–95 revenue expenditure budgets and 1995–96 SSAs is given in the following table. Outturn expenditure for 1994–95 is not yet available. Budgeted expenditure includes spending financed through the use of reserves and spending about SSAs within capping limits and is not directly comparable with SSAs.

*Local authority estimates of revenue expenditure for 1994–95 and 1995–96 SSAs*[1]

| | *(a) 1994–95 budget (£000)* | *(b) 1995–96 SSA (£000)* | *(c) (b)–(a) difference (£000)* | *(d) Percentage above SSA* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Alyn and Deeside | 10,937 | 10,296 | –641 | –6 |
| Colwyn | 8,511 | 8,520 | 9 | 0 |
| Delyn | 14,517 | 9,339 | –5,178 | –36 |
| Glyndwr | 5,972 | 5,473 | –499 | –8 |
| Rhuddlan | 9,073 | 8,900 | –173 | –2 |
| Wrexham Maelor | 17,168 | 16,574 | –594 | –3 |
| Carmarthen | 8,875 | 7,869 | –1,006 | –11 |
| Ceredigion | 10,384 | 10,446 | 62 | 1 |
| Dinefwr | 5,922 | 6,027 | 105 | 2 |
| Llanelli | 14,240 | 13,294 | –946 | –7 |
| Preseli Pembrokeshire | 12,792 | 11,477 | –1,315 | –10 |
| South Pembrokeshire | 7,741 | 8,104 | 363 | 5 |
| Blaenau Gwent | 16,674 | 15,568 | –1,106 | –7 |
| Islwyn | 14,654 | 11,729 | –2,925 | –20 |
| Monmouth | 10,654 | 9,879 | –775 | –7 |
| Newport | 23,342 | 22,305 | –1,037 | –4 |
| Torfaen | 14,124 | 13,584 | –540 | –4 |
| Aberconwy | 9,023 | 8,609 | –414 | –5 |
| Arfon | 10,948 | 9,890 | –1,058 | –10 |
| Dwyfor | 7,687 | 6,035 | –1,652 | –21 |
| Meirionnydd | 6,605 | 6,187 | –418 | –6 |
| Ynys Mon | 12,908 | 11,242 | –1,666 | 13 |
| Cynon Valley | 14,133 | 13,659 | –474 | –3 |
| Merthyr Tydfil | 12,243 | 12,135 | –108 | –1 |
| Ogwr | 20,957 | 21,279 | 322 | 2 |
| Rhondda | 19,589 | 17,622 | –1,967 | –10 |
| Rhymney Valley | 16,038 | 15,879 | –159 | –1 |
| Taff Ely | 15,435 | 14,662 | –773 | –5 |
| Brecknock | 7,615 | 6,631 | –984 | –13 |
| Montgomeryshire | 7,980 | 7,679 | –301 | –4 |
| Radnorshire | 3,348 | 3,486 | 138 | 4 |
| Cardiff | 47,641 | 45,787 | –1,854 | –4 |
| Vale of Glamorgan | 16,636 | 15,063 | –1,573 | –9 |
| Port Talbot | 16,088 | 9,004 | –7,084 | –44 |
| Lliw Valley | 8,802 | 9,039 | 237 | 3 |
| Neath | 13,891 | 10,389 | –3,502 | –25 |
| Swansea | 34,450 | 32,710 | –1,740 | –5 |
| Clwyd | 268,390 | 266,705 | –1,685 | –1 |
| Dyfed | 248,209 | 241,288 | –6,921 | –3 |
| Gwent | 294,408 | 291,717 | –2,691 | –1 |
| Gwynedd | 163,718 | 160,883 | –2,835 | –2 |
| Mid Glamorgan | 376,390 | 366,613 | –9,777 | –3 |
| Powys | 90,531 | 90,776 | 245 | 0 |
| South Glamorgan | 263,775 | 268,620 | 4,845 | 2 |
| West Glamorgan | 250,163 | 241,661 | –8,502 | –3 |
| Total districts | 507,597 | 466,373 | –41,224 | –8 |
| Total counties | 1,955,584 | 1,928,262 | –27,322 | –1 |
| Total police authorities | 283,256 | 315,753 | 32,497 | 11 |
| Total Wales | 2,746,437 | 2,710,388 | –36,049 | –1 |

[1] Net revenue expenditure for 1994–95. The figures have been adjusted for the transfer of police services and changes to recoupment to provide comparability with SSAs but have not been adjusted for the transfer of the careers service. 1995–96 count SSAs include the additional resources for care in the community. 1994–95 expenditure includes £46.3 million funded through the use of reserves and £66.8 million spending above SSA within capping limits. Includes community councils.

### School and University Teachers' Pay

**Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the relative real term salary increases of teachers and university lecturers. [20929]

**Mr. Richards:** Comparisons between school teacher and lecturer salary increases are not meaningful. Teachers' salaries flow from recommendations of the School Teachers' Review Body. The salaries of lecturers result from negotiations between employers and employee representatives. In recent years the salary movement of both groups has had to take account of Government policy for pay in the public sector. Between April 1979 and April 1994 the average salary of a teacher rose by 60 per cent. in real terms as measured by the new earnings survey. In the same period the average salary of a university academic rose by 27 per cent. in real terms as measured by the new earnings survey.

### Health Service Appointments

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will publish an up-to-date list of all the chairs and non-executive directors of each NHS trust board, indicating the gender and occupation of each individual and; [21357]

(2) if he will publish an up-to-date list by region of all the chairs and non-executive members of each health authority, indicating the gender and occupation of each individual. [21360]

**Mr. Richards:** The information requested is given in "Appointments by the Secretary of State for Wales 1 March 1995", which is available in the Library of the House.

### Market Testing

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will estimate the cost of employing consultants in connection with market testing programmes in which his Department has been engaged since their inception. [21380]

**Mr. Redwood:** Market testing has been undertaken as part of the "Competing for Quality" programme.

The estimated cost of consultants engaged in this respect from April 1992 to date is £287,600.

### Mink Farms

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the number of licenced mink farms in each year since 1989.

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** There have been no licensed mink farms in Wales at any time since 1989.

### European Funding

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will list those projects in privatised companies which have received European social fund support since privatisation indicating *(a)* the level of funding and *(b)* the dates when it was received; [21295]

(2) if he will list those public projects which received European social fund support and were subsequently privatised over the last 10 years, indicating *(a)* the level of funding and *(b)* the dates when it was received. [21294]

**Mr. Redwoood:** No such privatised companies in Wales have applied for European social fund support

since 1990. Information for the years before 1990 could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 10 January, *Official Report*, column *51*, if he will list those projects in privatised companies which have received European regional development funding since privatisation indicating *(a)* the level of funding and *(b)* the dates when it was received. [20578]

**Mr. Redwood:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him today by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade.

### Illiteracy

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the current reported rate of illiteracy; and what were the figures in each of the previous four years. [20695]

**Mr. Richards:** The adult basic skills unit annual report for 1994 looked at those people who lack "basic skills", which are defined as

"the ability to read, write, speak, and use mathematics at a level necessary to function and progress at work and in society in general".

The report does not contain a figure for Wales on its own.

### Hospitality

**Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much was spent on official hospitality by his Department in 1994–95. [21210]

**Mr. Redwood:** A total of £28,784.

### Civil Servants

**Mr. Ainger:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many civil service appointments were made to administrative assistant and administrative officer posts in his Department and the agencies for which he is accountable in each quarter from September 1993 until April 1995. [21778]

**Mr. Redwood:** During the period in question my Department, including its executive agency Cadw, appointed seven substantive administrative staff as follows:

four administrative officers and two administrative assistants in the September quarter 1993;

one administrative assistant in the December quarter 1994.

### Welsh Health Common Services Authority

**Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 5 April, *Official Report*, column *1130*, if he will place in the Library a copy of his letter of 28 March 1994 to the Welsh Health Common Services Authority. [21937]

**Mr. Redwood:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 21 February 1995, *Official Report*, column *124*.

### University Hospital of Wales

**Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he has received the business case for the highway infrastructure related to the expansion of the University hospital of Wales; if the Eastern avenue east on-slip is expected to be part of that highway infrastructure; and which elements of the University hospital of Wales highway infrastructure package require Treasury approval. [21936]

**Mr. Redwood:** An outline business case for the westbound slip road proposal is being prepared by the University hospital of Wales Healthcare NHS trust but has not yet been received. The eastbound slip road proposal is included within the outline business case for a multi-storey carpark at the UHW which has received approval to move to the next stage of testing private sector interest in the proposal. Treasury approval would be required for either slip road if, in the event, public funds were needed to progress these developments.

### Apprenticeships

**Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the total amount of public support given to the modern apprentice scheme for Wales and for each county or training area; what proportion was spent by employers, training and enterprise councils and other identifiable groups for the last three available years; and if he will make a statement. [20377]

**Mr. Richards:** A total of £1.285 million was made available in 1994–95 to the seven Welsh TECs to support the introduction of modern apprenticeships. This sum was supplemented by a further £10.262 million for the purchase of capital equipment of which the Welsh TECs and other organisations in both the public and private sectors contributed £1.074 million.

Alongside this, colleges used some of the funding made available to them by the Further Education Funding Council for Wales—£144.985 million in 1994–95—to support modern apprenticeships.

The development of modern apprenticeships is fundamental to sustaining the competitive edge that Welsh industry needs to compete in world markets. In 1994–95, the first year of modern apprenticeships, I made manufacturing engineering a priority. In 1995–96, while continuing to give a high priority to manufacturing, I am extending support for modern and accelerated modern apprenticeships to other key occupational areas needed by Welsh businesses. These initiatives will allow for up to 3,400 young people to start apprenticeship training.

Figures in the following table set out the funding I made available in each of the TEC areas in 1994–95. No figures are available on the amounts spent by employers or other identifiable groups.

*Welsh Office funding*

| *TEC areas* | *Programme costs £ millions* | *Capital costs £ millions* | *Additional contributions to capital costs by TECs and other organisations £ millions* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gwent | 0.189 | 1.556 | 0.275 |
| Mid Glamorgan | 0.214 | 1.640 | 0.228 |
| North East Wales | 0.140 | 0.705 | 0.107 |

| TEC areas | Welsh Office funding: Programme costs £ millions | Welsh Office funding: Capital costs £ millions | Additional contributions to capital costs by TECs and other organisations £ millions |
|---|---|---|---|
| North West Wales | 0.171 | 1.023 | 0.098 |
| Powys | 0.057 | 0.459 | 0.029 |
| South Glamorgan | 0.130 | 1.375 | 0.157 |
| West Wales | 0.384 | 2.420 | 0.180 |
| Total | 1.285 | 9.188 | 1.074 |

### Doctors and Nurses (Languages Spoken)

**Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, (1) what estimate he has made of the proportion of doctors practising in Wales who speak *(a)* Welsh, *(b)* Punjabi and *(c)* Urdu; and if he will make a statement; [20920]

(2) what estimate he has made of the proportion of nurses working in Wales who speak *(a)* Welsh, *(b)* Punjabi and *(c)* Urdu; and if he will make a statement. [20921]

**Mr. Richards:** None. This information is not held centrally.

### NHS Cost Improvement Programme

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the total annual cost improvement programme in the National Health Service provider units in each of the last four years. [21332]

**Mr. Richards:** In the latest available four years, the minimum efficiency savings targets, including cash-releasing cost improvement programmes, set for the NHS in Wales were as follows:

| Year | Per cent. |
|---|---|
| 1990–91 | 1.1 |
| 1991–92 | 1.1 |
| 1992–93 | 1.1 |
| 1993–94 | 2.0 |

of authorities' recurrent revenue cash allocations. This resulted in cumulative cash releasing savings over the four years of £53 million at 1993–94 prices.

The minimum efficiency target for 1994–95 was 2.7 per cent., which included a target of 1.3 per cent. for further cash-releasing cost improvement savings—forecast cash savings of £17 million—and 0.45 per cent. or £6 million in respect of savings to be achieved through reductions in management costs. For 1995–96 the minimum efficiency target is 3 per cent., which includes a further £3.25 million cash savings for reductions in management, administrative and clerical costs.

It is for the health authority to determine in its contracts with service providers how the remaining efficiency target should be split between cash-releasing savings and activity increases generated by increased production.

### Conflicts Of Interest

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on how many occasions during the last five years *(a)* civil servants and *(b)* special advisers in his Department or its agencies have declared conflicts of interests; and how many instructions have been issued about their retention, disposal or management. [21401]

**Mr. Redwood:** The Department and agencies for which I am responsible deal with any conflicts of interest involving civil servants in accordance with the established guidance. The information requested is not held centrally.

In the last five years, one special adviser has declared a conflict of interest.

### Falconry

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many licences have been issued in each year since 1988 to possess birds of prey; and what were the numbers of birds of each species held under such licences. [21244]

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him today by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many permits have been issued to falconers to take protected species of birds as quarry in each year since 1988; what were the species in respect of which such permits were issued; and what were the numbers of each species taken. [21246]

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** The responsibility for the issue of licences did not devolve to the Welsh Office until 1991. Details of licences issued to take protected species in Wales in the course of falconry for the period 1992–93 are listed in the following table.

| Species | Number of licenses[1] | Birds killed |
|---|---|---|
| *1992* | | |
| Alauda arvensis | 4 | 16 |
| Anthus pratensis | — | 1 |
| *1993* | | |
| Turdus merula | 3 | 16 |
| *1994* | | |
| Turdus merula | 5 | 8 |
| Alauda arvensis | — | 20 |
| Anthus pratensis | — | 1 |
| *1995* | | |
| Alauda arvensis | 1 | 19 |
| Anthus pratensis | — | 3 |

[1] Licenses covered all or some of the named species.
Turdus merula—Blackbird
Alauda arvensis—Skylark
Anthus pratensis—Meadow pipit.

# Written Answers to Questions

*Tuesday 2 May 1995*

## HOME DEPARTMENT

### Dog Breeders

**Mr. Jamieson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what plans he has to introduce legislation to require dog breeding establishments to incorporate RSPCA guidelines and to be registered with the Kennel Club. [22057]

(2) what representations he has received about the conditions and welfare of dogs at breeding establishments, and if he will make a statement. [22056]

**Mr. Nicholas Baker:** My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans for extending the current legal controls over dog breeding establishments.

All domestic and captive animals are protected against ill treatment by the Protection of Animals Act 1911. Additionally, establishments where dogs are bred for sale are subject to the controls of the Breeding of Dogs Act 1973, which requires dog breeders to be licensed by the local authority. It is for local authorities, which have extensive powers to check on the standards of health, welfare and accommodation of the dogs, to enforce the legislation. These powers were strengthened by the Breeding of Dogs Act 1991, which allows local authorities to enter under warrant any premises other than domestic dwellings, where it is believed that a dog breeding business is carried out.

The Department has received 11 letters from Members of Parliament following an article on dog breeding establishments published by the *News of the World* on 16 April 1995.

### Civil Servants

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the individual value of each *(a)* compulsory early retirement and *(b)* flexible early retirement package received by civil servants leaving his Department on grounds of limited efficiency in each of the last five years. [22084]

**Mr. Howard:** This information is not readily available.

### Anti-Semitic Material

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has made to the Irish Government about anti-Semitic material being distributed within or from the Republic; and if he will make a statement. [22303]

**Mr. Nicholas Baker:** None. The distribution of any such material within the Irish Republic is a matter for the Irish Government. I am not aware of any specific concerns regarding its possible distribution to the United Kingdom.

### Prison Service Plans

**Mr. Hawkins:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the Prison Service's plans for the period 1995 to 1998. [22402]

**Mr. Howard:** The Prison Service's corporate plan for 1995 to 1998, together with its business plan setting out its detailed programme of work for 1995–96, are being published today. Copies are being placed in the Library.

The business plan sets as the service's top priority for 1995–96 improvement in performance on security. The other priorities are implementing incentives for good behaviour by prisoners; implementing the controls on temporary release I announced on 18 November 1994, and ensuring that every prison has an effective strategy for detecting and dealing with drug abuse.

The business plan also sets out the service's key targets for 1995–96, which are:

1. To ensure that no category A prisoners escape.
2. To ensure that the total numbers of escapes from prison establishments and from escorts, expressed as a percentage of the average prison population, is at least 25 per cent. lower than in 1994–95.
3. To ensure that the rate of assaults on staff, prisoners and others, expressed as a percentage of the average prison population, is lower than in 1994–95.
4. To ensure that no prisoners are held three to a cell in accommodation intended for one prisoner, subject to ensuring that no prisoners are held in police cells unless this is absolutely unavoidable.
5. To ensure that all prisoners have access to sanitation at all times by the end of February 1996, provided that the prison population does not increase significantly above current projections and there is no major unplanned loss of accommodation.
6. To ensure that prisoners spend, on average, at least 25.5 hours per week in purposeful activity.
7. To ensure that by 31 March 1996 at least 38 per cent. of prisoners are held in establishments where prisoners are unlocked on weekdays for at least 12 hours, provided this can be supported by an active and constructive regime.
8. To ensure that all prisoners have the opportunity to exceed minimum visiting entitlements, subject to qualifying under earned incentive schemes.
9. To ensure that the average cost per prisoner place does not exceed £24,600.

### Drugs Control

**Mr. Nigel Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when was the last time that he met Dr. Lee Brown, director of the United States Office of National Drug Control Policy; and what was the purpose of the meeting. [22403]

**Mr. Howard:** I last met Dr. Brown on 24 April to sign a memorandum of understanding on counter-drug technologies. The memorandum of understanding will promote co-operation between my Department and his on the development of technologies to assist the fight against drugs. Four key areas will initially be covered by the programme of cooperation. These are information technology, treatment and prevention of drug misuse, police communications and surveillance technologies, and systems for detecting illicit goods. The signing of the memorandum of understanding is another example of this country's determination to work with others to tackle the international menace of drugs misuse.

### Deportees

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many pregnant women given refusal notices or deported have *(a)* given birth or *(b)* had medical difficulties on the aircraft in each of the last five years; [21983]

(2) how many women, pregnant over 30 weeks, were given refusal notices in each of the last five years and returned to the country from which they departed for the United Kingdom. [21984]

**Mr. Nicholas Baker:** The information requested is not available.

**Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people lawfully resident in the United Kingdom and without any charges or criminal convictions against them have been deported on grounds of national security in the past five years; and what was their average length of lawful residence in the United Kingdom. [21891]

**Mr. Nicholas Baker** *[holding answer 1 May 1995]:* One person without a charge or criminal conviction against him has been removed from the United Kingdom under the deportation process on grounds of national security in the last five years. He had been resident in the United Kingdom for nearly three years at the time of removal. This excludes persons who departed voluntarily after being issued with a notice of intention to deport.

**Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many residents, lawfully in the United Kingdom and without any charges or criminal convictions against them, have been the subject of deportation orders in the last five years; [21591]

(2) how many people, lawfully resident in the United Kingdom for more than 10 years and without any charges or criminal convictions, have been subject to deportation orders in the last 10 years. [21592]

**Mr. Nicholas Baker** *[holding answer 28 April 1995]:* The available information relates to all persons issued with a notice of intention to deport on national security grounds. Identifying and excluding those with a charge or criminal conviction against them would involve disproportionate cost. Some 202 such notices have been issued since 1990, including 176 at the time of the Gulf war. Six persons who have lived in the United Kingdom for more than 10 years have been issued with such a notice since 1985.

## TREASURY

### Investment Companies

**Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what progress has been made with the Treasury's plans for legislation to enable the formation of open-ended investment companies in the United Kingdom. [22401]

**Mr. Nelson:** The Treasury has today published a consultation document containing draft regulations to be made, subject to the approval of both Houses, under the European Communities Act 1972. I have arranged for copies to be placed in the Library.

The regulations will permit a new investment vehicle which will be a type of collective investment scheme, like the familiar authorised unit trust, but constituted as a corporate body. Its shareholders will pool their investment funds and thus gain the advantage of access to expert investment management with the ability to spread their investment risks. The open-ended investment company has been formulated deliberately to offer the same standard of investor protection as the unit trust but using a more modern and flexible approach.

The draft ECA regulations will establish a special purpose corporate code which delineates the basic structure of the open ended investment company. Each company will have a board, including a designated corporate director charged with day-to-day responsibility for managing the invested assets of the company, which will be held in trust by a depositary. The company will have annual general meetings at which the directors will account to the company's shareholders for their stewardship of the company and its assets.

To complete the regulatory framework for the open ended investment company, the Securities and Investments Board will issue product regulations, about which it will also consult shortly. These regulations will specify that shares in open-ended investment companies are to be bought and sold at a single price on each trading day, in contrast to the spread between the prices at which units in unit trusts are bought and sold now. SIB will also regulate the different classes of shares which open-ended investment companies may have. These regulations will allow umbrella companies with a number of subfunds each allotted to a different category of investments.

In due course there will also be regulations made under the Finance Act 1995 to define the tax treatment of open ended investment companies. The new regime will be equivalent to the taxation arrangements for authorised unit trusts.

Because the proposed regulations are to be made under the ECA, they will permit only open ended investment companies which satisfy the UCITS—undertakings for collective investment in transferable securities—directive. Subject to further consultation, the Treasury is also exploring the scope for widening the investment and borrowing powers available to open ended investment companies by means of an order made under the Deregulation and Contracting Out Act 1994.

## LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

### Civil Servants

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list the individual value of each *(a)* compulsory early retirement and *(b)* flexible early retirement package received by civil servants leaving his Department on grounds of limited efficiency in each of the last five years.

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** This information is not held by my Department in a readily accessible form. The information which the hon. Member has requested is being collated and I will provide him with a substantive answer shortly.

## ENVIRONMENT

### Endangered Species

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many import permits for the convention on international trade in endangered species appendix I species of cranes his Department has issued in 1994 and 1995. [21831]

**Sir Paul Beresford:** In 1994 my Department issued nine permits allowing the import of specimens of crane listed in appendix I of CITES. So far, in 1995, one permit has been issued.

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what has been the population of *(a)* pine martens *(b)* peregrine falcons, *(c)* hen harriers and *(d)* sparrowhawks in each year since 1980; and what is his estimate of the amount of damage each species does to game birds. [21850]

**Sir Paul Beresford:** My Department's statutory advisors, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, advise that annual population estimates are not available for these species. Specific surveys have been undertaken for each species since 1980 and the most up-to-date figures for England are as follows:

| *Year* | *Species* | *Population* |
|---|---|---|
| 1987–88 | Pine marten | 100 individuals |
| 1991 | Peregrine falcons | 308 pairs |
| 1993 | Hen harriers | 16 pairs |
| 1986 | Sparrowhawks | There is no separate figure for England, but the population in Great Britain was last estimated at 32,000 pairs. |

There is no reliable information available on whether pine marten, peregrine falcons, hen harriers and sparrowhawks affect game bird populations.

### Leeds Development Corporation

**Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much was spent on public relations and publicity by the Leeds development corporation in each financial year of its existence. [21610]

**Sir Paul Beresford:** Leeds development corporation's expenditure on public relations and publicity, which includes the corporation's promotional and marketing activity was £223,000 in 1988–89, £324,000 in 1989–90, £480,000 in 1990–91, £499,000 in 1991–92, £300,000 in 1992–93, £250,000 in 1993–94 and £228,000 in 1994–95. These payments constitute about 3 per cent. of the corporation's expenditure, which has attracted a total of £357 millions of private sector investment—a public to private leverage ratio of 1 to 6.4.

**Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out the assets transferred from the Leeds development corporation to Leeds city council, together with their value. [21612]

**Sir Paul Beresford:** Amenity and highway land with a nil market value were transferred from Leeds development corporation's ownership to Leeds city council prior to the winding up of the corporation. In addition, an endowment of £200,001 has been paid to the city council to cover maintenance in perpetuity of landscaping works undertaken by the corporation.

### Civil Servants

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the individual value of each *(a)* compulsory early retirement and *(b)* flexible early retirement package received by civil servants leaving his Department on grounds of limited efficiency in each of the last five years. [22087]

**Sir Paul Beresford:** Compensation payments for early retirement on grounds of limited efficiency are age, salary and service related. Details of limited efficiency early retirements for each of the last five financial years are as follows:

| | *Annual compensation payment to age 60 (rate pa)* £ | *Superannuation lump sum* £ | *Lump sum compensation payment* £ | *Compensation in lieu of notice (if any)* £ |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1990–91 Compulsory | None | None | None | Not available in the time given |
| Flexible | 8,212 | 24,935 | Nil | |
| 1991–92 Compulsory | None | None | None | Not available in the time given |
| Flexible | 10,515 | 31,543 | Nil | |
| 1992–93 Compulsory | None | None | None | Not available in the time given |
| Flexible | 10,138 | 27,288 | Nil | |
| 1993–94 Compulsory | 10,590 | 30,801 | 15,103 | Not available in the time given |
| Flexible | 26,888 | 80,665 | 16,611 | |
| 1994–95 Compulsory | None | None | None | Not available in the time given |
| Flexible | None | None | None | |

### Local Government Boundaries

**Mr. Rendel:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will announce a timetable for the review of metropolitan authority boundaries with particular reference to Southport, Merseyside and Lancashire. [22001]

**Mr. Curry:** We are considering whether to direct the Local Government Commission to conduct boundary reviews of certain metropolitan areas, and will make an

announcement in due course. We expect that any reviews of metropolitan areas will be conducted after the commission has completed the shire district structural reviews, which we hope will be by early 1996.

**Mr. Rendel:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will make an announcement in response to the final recommendation of the Local Government Commission concerning the move of Billericay from Basildon district council to form Brentwood and Billericay district council. [22002]

**Mr. Curry:** Basildon district is to be referred to the Local Government Commission for a further review which will examine the structure of local government in the area. No decision on boundaries can sensibly be taken until the commission has made its recommendations on the wider question of structure.

### Cammell Laird Site, Birkenhead

**Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will report the progress which has been made since last summer with his attempts to use the offices of English Partnership to set up a venture with English Partnerships and VSEL on the Lairds site in Birkenhead. [22213]

**Sir Paul Beresford:** English Partnerships and VSEL have been working closely together on proposals for the redevelopment of the Cammell Laird site. One important objective, the continued use of the northern part of the site for ship repair activity, has been secured following the announcement today of the sale of that part of the site to the newly named Cammell Laird Industries. This follows closely on the decision of Mackie Automotive Systems to establish themselves in one of the existing buildings on the southern part of the site.

VSEL and English Partnerships intend to continue to work together within a broad framework to achieve development of the rest of the site and build on the increased industrial interest that is being shown; they are discussing the form that arrangement might take.

### Housing Benefit (Reversionary Interest)

**Mr. Rooker:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will change the housing benefit regulations to adopt the definition of reversionary interest in use in Northern Ireland. [20346]

**Mr. Roger Evans:** I have been asked to reply.

A recent Court of Appeal judgment has held that property in England or Wales which the claimant owns but which is let to tenants is a reversionary interest. This means that in all cases the value of such property has to be disregarded as a capital resource when entitlement to housing benefit is assessed. We propose to bring forward amending regulations to rectify this situation. We are currently considering the form that this amendment should take.

## PRIME MINISTER

### Engagements

**Sir Peter Tapsell:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 2 May. [20380]

**Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 2 May 1995. [20379]

**The Prime Minister:** This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

### Barings Bank

**Mr. MacShane:** To ask the Prime Minister what meetings he has had with directors or executives of Barings bank since 1990. [21130]

**The Prime Minister:** None. However, directors and executives of Barings bank have been present at a number of functions that I have attended since 1990.

### Crown Copyright

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the ownership of *(a)* top copies of his speeches, *(b)* treaty agreements signed by him in his capacity as Prime Minister, *(c)* original copies of letters received by him from her Majesty, *(d)* original copies of correspondence or other communications received by him from the heads of Government and *(e)* original copies of correspondence, minutes, records of meetings or other documents and communications with or in relation to or from ministers or public bodies. [22216]

**The Prime Minister:** Papers in all the categories listed belong to the Crown, with the exception of top copies of speeches made in a personal capacity or as a constituency Member of Parliament, and correspondence of a purely personal nature.

### Churchill Documents

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his oral answer of 27 April to the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), *Official Report*, column 97, if he will place in the Library details of those papers of Sir Winston Churchill being purchased by the national heritage memorial fund. [22215]

**The Prime Minister:** This is a matter for the national heritage memorial fund. I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member, placing a copy of his letter in the Library of the House.

### Equal Opportunities

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Prime Minister (1) what progress has been made within his Department on equal opportunities matters; [21512]

(2) what progress he hopes to achieve in his Department over the next three months to push forward the declaration signed in October 1994 at the Vienna conference in preparation for the fourth UN conference on women; and if he will agree to incorporate a section on equal opportunities in his Department's annual report; [21514]

(3) if he will publish the gender assessment being prepared by his Department; [21513]

(4) which Minister in his Department has responsibility for equal opportunities issues. [21511]

**The Prime Minister:** For these purposes, my office is part of the Cabinet Office. I refer the hon. Member to the replies given today by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service and Science.

### Conflicts of Interest

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Prime Minister on how many occasions during the last five years *(a)* civil servants and *(b)* special advisers in his Department or its agencies have declared conflicts of interest; and how many instructions have been issued about their retention, disposal or management. [21392]

**The Prime Minister** *[holding answer 1 May 1995]:* For this purpose, my office is part of the Cabinet Office and I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on 1 May *Official Report,* column *77.*

### Market Testing

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Prime Minister, if he will estimate the cost of employing consultants in connection with market-testing programmes in which his Department has been engaged since their inception. [21381]

**The Prime Minister** *[holding answer 1 May 1995]:* For this purpose my office is part of the Cabinet Office and I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on 1 May *Official Report,* column *76.*

## TRADE AND INDUSTRY

### Auditors Supervisory Bodies

**Mr. Lidington:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he has received the third annual reports of the recognised supervisory bodies for company auditors under part II of the Companies Act 1989; and if he will make a statement. [22600]

**Mr. Jonathan Evans:** I have received the third annual reports of all the recognised supervisory bodies for company auditors, and have placed copies in the Library of the House. My Department will be discussing the contents of the reports with the bodies.

### Film Distribution Industry

**Mr. Cran:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to promote competition in the film distribution industry in the United Kingdom. [21989]

**Mr. Jonathan Evans:** Following the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the supply of films for exhibition in cinemas in the UK, published on 6 October 1994, the Director General of Fair Trading is currently, at my request, seeking undertakings from nine distributors and six exhibitors named as monopolists in the report to cease the practice of alignment and to restrict minimum exhibition periods. The DGFT will report to me on the outcome of his negotiations by 10 July 1995.

### Ship Building

**Mr. Loyden:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the gross tonnage of merchant ships built in UK yards in each year since 1965; and if he will make a statement. [21868]

**Mr. Page:** The information is in the table:

*Merchant ships built in UK yards*

| *Year* | *1,000 gross tonnes* |
|---|---|
| 1965 | 1,204 |
| 1966 | 1,130 |
| 1967 | 1,192 |
| 1968 | 1,046 |
| 1969 | 814 |
| 1970 | 1,297 |
| 1971 | 1,259 |
| 1972 | 1,208 |
| 1973 | 1,069 |
| 1974 | 1,189 |
| 1975 | 1,203 |
| 1976 | 1,460 |
| 1977 | 1,007 |
| 1978 | 1,135 |
| 1979 | 707 |
| 1980 | 431 |
| 1981 | 217 |
| 1982 | 453 |
| 1983 | 540 |
| 1984 | 411 |
| 1985 | 225 |
| 1986 | 106 |
| 1987 | 247 |
| 1988 | 31 |
| 1989 | 106 |
| 1990 | 134 |
| 1991 | 110 |
| 1992 | 229 |
| 1993 | 288 |
| 1994 | 224 |

*Source:*
CSO—Annual Abstract of Statistics

### Insolvency Service

**Mr. McAllion:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he intends to lay before Parliament a draft enabling order for contracting out work of the Insolvency Service agency. [21809]

**Mr. Jonathan Evans:** A draft order to enable the contracting out of certain of the Official Receivers' functions was laid before Parliament for the approval of both Houses on Friday 28 April 1995.

### Nuclear Installations Inspectorate

**Mr. McFall:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what discussions he has had with the nuclear installations inspectorate over the possible awarding of licences for operators; [22062]

(2) what discussions he has had recently with Her Majesty's chief inspector of nuclear installations. [22064]

**Mr. Page:** I have had no recent discussions with the Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate although my officials have frequent discussions with it on issues relating to its nuclear regulatory activities.

### Telephone Services, Northern Ireland

**Mr. McGrady:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when competition will be introduced to the supply of telephone services in Northern Ireland. [21124]

**Mr. Ian Taylor:** Competition has existed in the supply of telecommunications services in Northern Ireland for some years, in the form of Mercury and mobile cellular services. Further competition will be introduced by the issue of a local delivery operator licence for cable. Applications for the Northern Ireland LDO franchise are currently under consideration and a franchise will be awarded in due course.

### Civil Servants

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the President to the Board of Trade if he will list the individual value of each *(a)* compulsory early retirement and *(b)* flexible early retirement package received by civil servants leaving his Department on grounds of limited efficiency in each of the last five years. [22077]

**Mr. Heseltine:** Compensation payments for early retirement on grounds of limited efficiency are age, salary and service related. The Department has had only one such retirement in the last five years. The details are as follows:

| | *Annual compensation payment to age 60 (rate pa)* | *Superannuation lump sum* | *Lump sum compensation payment* | *Compensation in lieu of notice (if any)* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *1990–91* | | | | |
| Flexible | 0 | 43,455 | 0 | 0 |

### Public Records

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list by grade and post those who have responsibility for deciding which internal documents held by his Department should be considered for archiving by the Public Record Office. [21991]

**Mr. Heseltine:** The Department follows the Public Record Office's recommended practice of reviewing papers when they are 10 years old and, if retained at that stage, again at 25 years old in order to reach a decision as to whether they are worthy of permanent preservation at the Public Record Office.

This two-stage review is carried out by a team of two higher executive officers and 10 executive officers.

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if the DTI inspectors' report into the share dealing activities of Lord Archer of Weston-super-Mare will be passed to the Public Record Office. [21992]

**Mr. Heseltine:** The Department follows the Public Record Office's recommended practice of reviewing papers when they are 10 years old and, if retained at that stage, again at 25 years old in order to reach a decision as to whether they are worthy of permanent preservation at the Public Record Office.

The report by inspectors appointed under section 177 of the Financial Services Act 1986 to investigate dealings in the shares of Anglia Television Group plc will be treated in accordance with the above policy.

The disclosure of information obtained by inspectors under section 177 of the Financial Services Act is prohibited by virtue of section 179 of that Act. Section 5(3) of the Public Records Act 1958 provides for public access to records except when the disclosure of those records is subject to a statutory bar on disclosure such as section 179 of the Financial Services Act.

### Small Businesses (Financial Advice)

**Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proposals he has for developing the range and diversity of financial advice for small and medium enterprises. [21824]

**Mr. Page:** The emerging network of business links across England has a vital role to play in advising businesses on the range of financing options open to them, and in advising the providers of finance and finance services of the needs of growing businesses. A task force of senior members of the financial community has made recommendations to me on the specific services which business links should be offering to their customers in this important area. The implementation of those recommendations is currently being discussed with the business link network with the aim of these services being available across the network from early next year.

### Plutonium

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade, what quantities of plutonium fuel rods have been manufactured at AWE Aldermaston for the prototype fast reactor at Dounreay; when these rods were manufactured; and what safeguards arrangements applied to their production and storage. [22031]

**Mr. Page:** A total of 29 clusters of experimental PFR fuel were made in a special facility at Aldermaston between 1962 and 1972. The PFR production fuel elements were later manufactured at Windscale. At the time of this campaign Aldermaston was run by UKAEA. The campaign took place before Euratom safeguards or the UK-Euratrom-IAEA agreement came into effect. The UKAEA exercised stringent nuclear material accountancy controls on all materials, including those in question. The plutonium used was part of a stock assigned to the fast reactor programme. The programme had no links to weapons work at Aldermaston.

### Iraq

**Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what investigations he has carried out into the activities of Mr. Riad Al Taher; [21693]

(2) what representations he has received from Mr. Riad Al Taher about sanctions against Iraq; and if he will make a statement. [21694]

**Mr. Needham** *[holding answers 28 April 1995]:* We have not had any representations from Mr. Riad Al Taher and have not carried out any investigations into his activities.

**Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what assistance his Department will give to the Iraqi-British Interests Group on its forthcoming visit to Iraq; [21701]

(2) if he will make a statement on the relationship between his Department and Mr. Edmund Sykes; [21692]

(3) if he will make a statement on the forthcoming visit by the Iraqi-British Interests Group to Iraq; [21700]

(4) what requests for assistance his Department has received from the Iraqi-British Interests Group for its forthcoming visit to Iraq; [21702]

(5) if he will make a statement on the relationship between his Department and Mr. Stephen Crouch. [21691]

**Mr. Needham** *[holding answers 28 April 1995]:* The Iraqi-British Interests Group is an independent lobby group which has no official standing. My Department has no details of any specific visit to Iraq to be made by it. It has not made any requests for assistance in connection with such a visit; nor would we be prepared to provide organisational support for it to visit Iraq. Acts calculated to promote the supply of goods to or from Iraq would require a licence from my Department. Applications are dealt with on a case-by-case basis but licences are normally issued only for exports or discussions relating to goods permitted under sanctions—that is, humanitarian goods. Any contacts with Mr. Edmund Sykes and Mr. Stephen Crouch have been those necessary for the exercise of my Department's responsibilities.

## Lloyd's

**Mr. Mike O'Brien:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are his departmental estimates for the liability for payment by Lloyd's names during the years *(a)* 1995 and *(b)* 1996; and what are his estimates of how much can be met without recourse to Lloyd's central funds. [22071]

**Mr. Jonathan Evans** *[holding answer 1 May 1995]:* The Department neither needs nor is required to make such estimates in the exercise of its responsibilities under sections 83 to 86 of the Insurance Companies Act 1982. Any estimate of the amounts to be called from Lloyd's names would be speculative as the cash calls on names have yet to be declared during 1995, and the results to be declared during 1996 cannot be predicted with any precision.

**Mr. Mike O'Brien:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what supervision his Department will make of those Lloyd's names who have become insolvent and whose calls cannot be supported by Lloyd's funds supervised by his Department. [22072]

**Mr. Jonathan Evans** *[holding answer 1 May 1995]:* Any Lloyd's name who failed to meet the solvency requirement prescribed in section 83 (4) and (5) of the Insurance Companies Act 1982 would become subject to the Secretary of State's supervisory powers contained in part II of the Act. The particular use of those powers would depend on the circumstances of the case, but would include imposition of such requirements as may be desirable to protect policyholders against the risk that the name's underwriting liabilities would not be met.

**Mr. Mike O'Brien:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what estimates have been made by his Department for Lloyd's losses (a) for 1992 and (b) for 1993 which are (i) called but unpaid, (ii) declared losses but uncalled and (iii) potential losses expected but as yet undeclared; and what impact these estimates would have on determining the solvency of Lloyd's. [22099]

**Mr. Jonathan Evans** *[holding answer 1 May 1995]:* The Department neither needs nor is required to make estimates of the specific figures cited in the question in the exercise of its responsibilities under sections 83 to 86 of the Insurance Companies Act 1982. But in the compilation of the solvency returns all losses, whether or not called and/or paid, will have been brought properly into account in determining the liabilities for solvency purposes, and prudent provision will have been made for losses which have been incurred but not reported.

**Mr. Mike O'Brien:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his estimate of the number of Lloyd's names who could potentially be unable to meet calls on their assets if Lloyd's were unable to stand behind a call. [22073]

**Mr. Jonathan Evans** *[holding answer 1 May 1995]:* The Department neither needs nor is required to make such an estimate in the exercise of its responsibilities under sections 83 to 86 of the Insurance Companies Act 1982. Since all the auditors' certificates required under section 83 of the Insurance Companies Act 1982 were furnished in the most recent solvency test, the question did not arise.

## Conflicts of Interest

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade on how many occasions during the last five years *(a)* civil servants and *(b)* special advisers in his Department or its agencies have declared conflicts of interest; and how many instructions have been issued about their retention, disposal or management. [21398]

**Mr. Heseltine** *[holding answer 1 May 1995]:* Each senior official and special adviser is required to make declaration of their financial interests. This enables the Department to prevent potential conflicts of interest arising. In the case of other officials, conflicts of interest are dealt with by their line management. Records are not kept centrally.

## Privatisation (EC Funding)

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if he will list those projects in privatised companies which have received European social fund support since privatisation indicating *(a)* the level of funding and *(b)* the dates when it was received. [21299]

(2) if he will list those public projects which received European social fund support and were subsequently privatised over the last 10 years, indicating *(a)* the level of funding and *(b)* the dates when it was received. [21298]

**Mr. Page** *[holding answer 1 May 1995]:* European social fund grant applications from the following privatised companies within my Department's area of responsibility have been approved. The grants were for vocational training, guidance and counselling, and

employment support projects. The information relate to projects approved from 1990. Data for the years before 1990 could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

| | *Grant approved* £ | *Year* |
|---|---|---|
| Jaguar cars | 217,708 | 1990 |
| British Aerospace Dynamics Ltd. | 175,341 | 1990 |
| British Aerospace (Military Aircraft) Ltd. | 23,353 | 1990 |
| Rolls Royce plc | 241,725 | 1990 |

## WALES

### Consultants

**Mr. Ron Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what work he has commissioned from consultants Mason, Pittendrigh; what fees he has agreed in respect of this work; and if he will make a statement on the progress of work to date and the fees paid to date to these consultants. [21253]

**Mr. Redwood:** My Department has not commissioned any work from Mason Pittendrigh.

### Equal Opportunities

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which Minister in his Department has responsibility for equal opportunities matters. [21470]

**Mr. Redwood:** I have overall responsibility for the whole Department which includes equal opportunities issues which are integral to many policies. The Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones), has responsibility for equality issues and the Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards), has special responsibility for women's issues and issues relating to disability.

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what progress he hopes to achieve in his Department over the next three months to push forward the declaration signed in October 1994 at the Vienna conference in preparation for the fourth UN conference on women; and if he will agree to incorporate a section on equal opportunities in his Department's annual report. [21473]

**Mr. Redwood:** My Department, in line with other Departments, is committed to the principles set out in the regional platform for action agreed at the preparatory conference in Vienna for the fourth UN world conference on women. We have taken these forward through a wide range of programmes and initiatives and will continue to do so.

The progress of women, ethnic minority and disabled employees through the management grades towards senior posts, along with overall representation and examples of particular initiatives being taken, will be covered in the Welsh Office departmental report for 1996 onwards.

### Compulsory Competitive Tendering

**Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many local authorities in Wales have put the work of their direct labour organisations out to external competitive tenders; how many and which have not done so; and if he will make a statement. [21573]

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** All 45 principal authorities in Wales have put out to competitive tender work carried out by their direct labour/service organisations.

### Asthma

**Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for *(a)* each health authority in Wales and *(b)* Wales as a whole the total number of asthma cases treated in the last three years for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement. [20547]

**Mr. Richards:** Information on the number of individuals treated for asthma in Wales is not available centrally. However, for those treated as in-patients or day cases, the number of completed consultant episodes where asthma was recorded as the principal diagnosis in each of the last three years is given in the following table:

| | *Completed consultant episodes—asthma ICD 9 (493)* | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Health authority area of treatment* | *1991–92* | *1992–93* | *1993–94* |
| Clwyd | 895 | 796 | 872 |
| East Dyfed | 397 | 496 | 542 |
| Gwent | 967 | 1,099 | 1,003 |
| Gwynedd | 446 | 316 | 516 |
| Mid Glamorgan | 982 | 1,138 | 1,154 |
| Pembrokeshire | 265 | 258 | 277 |
| Powys | 135 | 139 | 117 |
| South Glamorgan | 1,442 | 1,213 | 1,421 |
| West Glamorgan | 762 | 718 | 296 |
| Wales | 6,291 | 6,173 | 6,198 |

### Housing Subsidy

**Mr. Dafis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the amount of housing revenue account subsidy for *(a)* 1992–93, *(b)* 1993–94 and *(c)* 1994–95 for each district council in Wales and for Wales as a whole, in each case showing the percentage change. [21049]

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** Information on the amount of housing revenue account subsidy paid is as follows:

*Housing revenue account subsidy*

| *Local Authority* | *1992–93* £ | *1993–94* £ | *Percentage change 1993–94 over 1992–93* | *1994–95*[1] £ | *Percentage change 1994–95 over 1993–94 (provisional)* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Aberconwy | 1,584,274 | 1,515,817 | –4.32 | 1,524,838 | 0.60 |
| Alyn and Deeside | 2,520,527 | 2,719,472 | 7.89 | 2,751,136 | 1.16 |
| Arfon | 2,942,801 | 3,116,312 | 5.90 | 2,825,706 | –9.33 |
| Blaenau Gwent | 10,775,958 | 11,272,511 | 4.61 | 11,286,414 | 0.12 |

*Housing revenue account subsidy*

| Local Authority | 1992–93 £ | 1993–94 £ | Percentage change 1993–94 over 1992–93 | 1994–95[1] £ | Percentage change 1994–95 over 1993–94 (provisional) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Brecknock | 714,469 | 749,124 | 4.85 | 774,012 | 3.32 |
| Cardiff | 19,410,690 | 19,496,006 | 0.44 | 21,358,039 | 9.55 |
| Carmarthen | 2,513,450 | 2,160,557 | –14.04 | 2,100,450 | –2.78 |
| Ceredigion | 1,884,669 | 1,786,023 | –5.23 | 1,719,132 | –3.75 |
| Colwyn | 2,109,823 | 2,176,710 | 3.17 | 2,223,516 | 2.15 |
| Cynon Valley | 4,947,233 | 5,065,626 | 2.39 | 4,752,984 | –6.17 |
| Delyn | 3,620,231 | 3,143,508 | –13.17 | 2,877,939 | –8.45 |
| Dinefwr | 1,246,634 | 1,189,524 | –4.58 | 1,281,196 | 7.71 |
| Dwyfor | 840,681 | 796,444 | –5.26 | 908,360 | 14.05 |
| Glyndwr | 827,842 | 860,859 | 3.99 | 667,859 | –22.42 |
| Islwyn | 5,369,027 | 5,281,749 | –1.63 | 5,620,094 | 6.41 |
| Llanelli | 7,044,582 | 7,774,394 | 10.36 | 8,105,862 | 4.26 |
| Lliw Valley | 4,308,923 | 4,136,117 | –4.01 | 4,086,333 | –1.20 |
| Meirionnydd | 1,061,048 | 1,022,707 | –3.61 | 967,774 | –5.37 |
| Merthyr Tydfil | 6,872,508 | 7,523,287 | 9.47 | 7,976,148 | 6.02 |
| Monmouth | 3,789,654 | 3,611,159 | 4.71 | 3,503,236 | –2.99 |
| Montgomeryshire | 666,527 | 474,913 | –28.75 | 295,577 | –37.76 |
| Neath | 4,776,019 | 4,765,055 | –0.23 | 5,269,282 | 10.58 |
| Newport | 11,244,594 | 10,794,066 | –4.01 | 10,937,908 | 1.33 |
| Ogwr | 7,692,875 | 7,532,193 | –2.09 | 7,381,391 | –2.00 |
| Port Talbot | 4,749,752 | 4,811,834 | 1.31 | 5,215,911 | 8.40 |
| Preseli Pembrokeshire | 2,755,958 | 2,806,607 | 1.84 | 3,035,119 | 8.14 |
| Radnorshire | 555,486 | 440,980 | –20.61 | 432,229 | –1.98 |
| Rhondda | 8,623,018 | 8,361,896 | –3.03 | 8,229,454 | –1.58 |
| Rhuddlan | 1,324,330 | 1,453,067 | 9.72 | 1,603,312 | 10.34 |
| Rhymney Valley | 10,884,002 | 10,823,491 | –0.56 | 11,702,169 | 8.12 |
| South Pembrokeshire | 1,642,291 | 1,351,363 | –17.71 | 1,457,527 | 7.86 |
| Swansea | 16,023,302 | 16,633,469 | 3.81 | 18,370,320 | 10.44 |
| Taff Ely | 6,938,835 | 6,735,632 | –2.93 | 6,754,749 | 0.28 |
| Torfaen | 13,117,637 | 12,842,923 | –2.09 | 12,438,124 | –3.15 |
| Vale of Glamorgan | 3,750,776 | 3,807,767 | 1.52 | 3,487,123 | –8.42 |
| Wrexham Maelor | 6,998,218 | 7,417,009 | 5.98 | 7,463,257 | 0.62 |
| Ynys Môn | 4,311,793 | 4,309,403 | –0.06 | 4,473,262 | 3.80 |
| Wales | 190,440,437 | 190,759,574 | 0.17 | 195,857,742 | 2.67 |

[1] On-account payments, subject to audit.

**Mr. Dafis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the level of notional rent set by his Department for the purpose of calculating housing subsidy for each district council in Wales and for Wales as a whole for *(a)* 1994–95 and *(b)* 1995–96. [21050]

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** Authorities calculate notional rents for subsidy according to a formula in the main housing revenue account subsidy determination for the relevant year, copies of which are available in the Library of the House. The notional rents calculated by each authority for 1994–95 and 1995–96 are given in the following table. The figures shown for Wales have been derived from these figures.

*Notional Weekly Rent per Dwelling*

| Local Authority | 1994–95 £ p | 1995–96 £ p |
|---|---|---|
| Aberconwy | 29.06 | 31.88 |
| Alyn and Deeside | 29.46 | 32.29 |
| Arfon | 30.71 | 33.69 |
| Blaenau Gwent | 31.13 | 32.96 |
| Brecknock | 31.23 | 33.81 |
| Cardiff | 36.13 | 38.96 |
| Carmarthen | 32.04 | 33.87 |
| Ceredigion | 31.69 | 33.87 |
| Colwyn | 28.60 | 31.42 |
| Cynon Valley | 29.67 | 31.50 |
| Delyn | 30.27 | 33.10 |
| Dinefwr | 28.33 | 30.54 |
| Dwyfor | 28.88 | 30.71 |
| Glyndwr | 29.67 | 32.50 |
| Islwyn | 30.85 | 32.83 |
| Llanelli | 27.37 | 29.19 |
| Lliw Valley | 29.67 | 31.88 |
| Meirionnydd | 28.12 | 30.02 |
| Merthyr Tydfil | 27.40 | 29.23 |
| Monmouth | 37.83 | 40.65 |
| Montgomeryshire | 33.75 | 36.58 |
| Neath | 28.02 | 30.85 |
| Newport | 36.31 | 38.33 |
| Ogwr | 31.81 | 33.63 |
| Port Talbot | 29.44 | 31.42 |
| Preseli Pembrokeshire | 30.17 | 32.71 |
| Radnorshire | 32.75 | 35.58 |
| Rhondda | 32.56 | 34.38 |
| Rhuddlan | 29.48 | 32.31 |
| Rhymney Valley | 31.44 | 33.27 |
| South Pembrokeshire | 34.06 | 36.08 |
| Swansea | 28.75 | 30.58 |
| Taff Ely | 28.67 | 31.12 |
| Torfaen | 35.04 | 36.87 |
| Vale of Glamorgan | 34.87 | 37.69 |
| Wrexham Maelor | 27.87 | 30.69 |
| Ynys Môn | 28.81 | 30.94 |
| Wales | 31.32 | 33.50 |

*Source:*

Local authorities' housing revenue account subsidy claim forms, which will be subject to audit.

## Civil Servants

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, if he will list the individual value of each *(a)* compulsory early retirement and *(b)* flexible early retirement package received by civil servants leaving his Department on grounds of limited efficiency in each of the last five years. [22074]

**Mr. Redwood:** There were no early retirements on grounds of limited efficiency for the financial years 1990–91, 1991–92, 1992–93 and 1993–94.

There were two early retirements on grounds of limited efficiency in 1994–95, both on flexible terms. Compensation payments are age, salary and service related. Details are as follows:

| *Annual compensation payments to age 60 (rate pa)* £ | *Enhancement of superannuation lump sum* £ |
|---|---|
| 14,396 | 7,334 |
| 7,450 | 3,725 |

## Endangered Species

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the population of *(a)* pine martens, *(b)* peregrine falcon, *(c)* hen harrier and *(d)* sparrowhawk in each year since 1980; and what is his estimate of the amount of damage each species does to game birds. [21849]

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** Annual population estimates are not available for pine martens, hen harriers, peregrine falcons and sparrowhawks. However, specific surveys have been undertaken for these species since 1980 and the most up to date figures for Wales are as follows:

(a) Pine martens—less than 50 individuals (1987–88).

(b) Peregrines—263 (1991).

(c) Hen Harriers—16 (1993).

(d) Sparrowhawks—no estimate.

There is no reliable information currently available relating to the effect of these species on game birds.

## Health Service Research Director

**Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what further progress he has to report on the appointment of a director for research and development for the NHS in Wales; and if the post will be established as a civil service or as an academic post. [22333]

**Mr. Redwood:** I understand that the University of Wales college of medicine will shortly be advertising the post of director of research and development for health and social care in Wales. This is a university post and not a civil service appointment.

## NHS Waiting Lists

**Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to have available the full set of data on waiting list figures for those waiting more than six months for their first out-patient appointment and 18 months or more for in-patient treatment for each health authority. [22332]

**Mr. Redwood:** The latest available information relates to waiting lists at 31 December 1994 and is shown in the following table. Similar information will be available in June for waiting lists at 30 March 1995.

| *Health authority area*[1] | *Number waiting more than six months for out-patient appointment* | *Number waiting more than 18 months for in-patient or day case treatment* |
|---|---|---|
| Clwyd | 2,234 | 128 |
| Dyfed | 2,968 | 337 |
| Gwent | 4,840 | 255 |
| Gwynedd | 1,222 | 66 |
| Mid Glamorgan | 5,475 | 347 |
| Powys | 636 | 18 |
| South Glamorgan | 9,258 | 363 |
| West Glamorgan | 5,747 | 145 |
| Wales | 32,380 | 1,659 |

[1] Including patients of GP fundholders.

*Source:*

Welsh Office core performance indicators.

## Dredging

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what were the scientific considerations behind his approval of the extraction of an extra 0.36 million tonnes of sand and other materials from the Nash bank before commencement of the Bristol channel study on the impact of dredging on the coastal environment. [22186]

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** The favourable Government view to extract an additional 360,000 tonnes from the Nash bank was based on an independent scientific analysis of the environmental monitoring data available as a condition of the current licence. This comprises regular bathymetric surveys of the bank and inspections of 12 local beaches to ensure that there are no adverse effects on beach sediment regimes. The assessment indicated that there was no significant risk to the coastline from the extraction proposed. A study which is expected to commence this year will examine the availability of marine aggregate resources in the Bristol channel, and the environmental consequences of and constraints on their utilisation.

## Local Government Finance

**Mr. Sweeney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he will pay the first instalment of the special grants to new principal councils in Wales. [22519]

**Mr. Redwood:** My Department will make these payments on or as soon as reasonably practicable after 4 May 1995, in accordance with the provisions of the Special Grant Report (Wales) 1995, approved by the House on 8 February 1995.

Parliamentary approval of this new expenditure is being sought in the 1995–96 main supply estimate for the local government, Wales vote, class XV vote 6. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure of £5.85 million on the first instalments of grant to the new principal councils will be met by a repayable advance form the Contingencies Fund.

## OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

### Afghan Refugees

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action Her Majesty's Government are taking *(a)* directly, *(b)* through the EU and *(c)* through other organisations, to supply wheat to be sown by Afghan refugees of displaced persons wishing to return to Afghanistan; and how much wheat is to be supplied to such persons over each of the next three years. [22305]

**Mr. Baldry:** A joint World Food Programme UNHCR/donors food assessment mission to Pakistan and Afghanistan is reviewing food aid needs. Donors, including the EU, will be briefed on their findings in Islamabad on 8 May. On 27 April 1995 the EU approved provision through the WFP of 20,000 tonnes of cereals, 1,000 tonnes of vegetable oil, 1,900 tonnes of sugar and 2,000 tonnes of pulses for resettling Afghan refugees and displaced persons.

We have recently provided wheat supplies at a cost of £1.25 million through CARE for relief programmes inside Afghanistan and will consider further contributions of food aid when needs arise, in consultation with other aid agencies, including the EU.

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 24 April, *Official Report,* column *330,* what are the minimum and maximum ages of Afghan refugee children in Pakistan who will receive primary education in future; what is the maximum age of Afghan refugee children who have received secondary education hitherto; and if he will make a statement. [22331]

**Mr. Baldry:** The minimum age for primary education is five years and children tend to leave at the age of 11 or 12. There is no strict leaving age as some children start school older than five. Secondary school education is divided into two levels. Children leave lower secondary or middle school at 14 or 15—that is, after three years—and most leave higher secondary around 16 or 17, although at both levels some graduate at an older age. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the Government of Pakistan encourage all children to remain at school as long as possible.

### Pakistan's Cotton Crop

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received about the causes of the reduction of Pakistan's cotton crop with particular reference to viral infection; what assistance Her Majesty's Government will give in *(a)* research and *(b)* direct assistance to combat them; and if he will make a statement. [22326]

**Mr. Baldry:** We have received reports from both our high commission and scientific staff at the Natural Resources Institute, who are currently working in Pakistan, on all factors affecting the cotton crop in Pakistan. This includes the current problem of leaf curl virus.

Through the NRI, ODA has supported a research project on cotton pest management in Pakistan since 1985. The latest phase of this project started in 1992 and is due to end in March 1996. ODA is also funding a study to determine the scope for further assistance in tackling this problem.

## ATTORNEY-GENERAL

### Civil Servants

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will list the individual value of each *(a)* compulsory early retirement and *(b)* flexible early retirement package received by civil servants leaving his Department on grounds of limited efficiency in each of the last five years. [22083]

**The Attorney-General:** Compensation payments for early retirement on grounds of limited efficiency are age, salary and service related. In the last five financial years, there have been no compulsory early retirements in the departments for which I am responsible. The only case of flexible early retirement was in January 1991 when the officer concerned received a lump sum payment of £15,339.39 and an annual compensation payment of £6,343.87.

## EMPLOYMENT

### Building Societies

**Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many jobs in the United Kingdom are in building societies. [21910]

**Miss Widdecombe:** Information on the number of jobs held in building societies is not separately available. However, there were 171,000 employees in Great Britain in financial institutions other then banking and bill discounting in December 1994.

### Age Discrimination

**Mr. Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he will investigate the extent to which ageism and age discrimination is acting as a barrier to the 40-plus age group in accessing *(a)* retraining schemes and *(b)* United Kingdom and European funding to set up 40-plus employment initiatives; [22054]

(2) what further steps he is taking to counter ageism and age discrimination in the workplace; and if he will make a statement; [22048]

(3) if he will investigate the extent to which ageism and age discrimination are contributing towards long-term unemployment among the 40-plus age group; and if he will make a statement; [22050]

(4) what steps his Department is taking to discourage employers from placing employment advertisements in the national press which specifically request applicants for supervisory, managerial, technical and professional employment from the specific age group 25 to 35 years; and if he will make a statement; [22052]

(5) which laws in the United Kingdom protect people from ageism in the workplace; and what assessment has he made as to the scope for those persons who feel they have been victims of age discrimination to seek legal redress at appropriate levels; [22053]

(6) what assessment he has made of the extent to which long term unemployment among the 40-plus age group is directly attributable to the prevalence of age discrimination; and if he will make a statement; [22049]

(7) what is the total annual cost to his Department of initiatives designed to investigate or tackle the incidence of age discrimination in the workplace; and if he will make a statement. [22051]

**Miss Widdecombe:** The Government are conducting a vigorous campaign, which I lead, urging employers to recruit, train and retain workers on merit, regardless of age. The "Getting On" booklet, published in March 1994, is aimed specifically at employers. We published a further booklet, "Too Old . . . who says?", in January this year, which offers help and advice to older people seeking work or training. The campaign is supported by an advisory group, which I chair, consisting of people with a wide experience of industry and with the problems of age discrimination in employment.

Surveys suggest that ageist practices in recruitment and retention are contributing to the difficulties of older workers. However, there are no barriers preventing the 40-plus age group accessing retraining schemes. The proportion of people aged 51 and over on adult training programmes has steadily increased over the last four years. Training for work, the main training programme, is open to unemployed people up to the age of 63, making it possible for older workers to enhance their skills and make best use of their potential. Access to funding in the UK and through the European social fund for employment initiatives is open to people of all ages with selection on merit. There are several instances where funding has been granted to older workers to set up their own initiatives.

My campaign specifically encourages employers to drop the use of age limits in all advertisements and recruitment. Indeed, it is the first step outlined in the "Getting On" booklet. Staff in Employment Service jobcentres have been given clear guidance to challenge the need for age limits on any vacancies they receive and to try to persuade employers to consider jobseekers only on their merits.

As for the legal position, employees who believe their dismissal or selection for redundancy was solely on grounds of age can already bring a complaint of unfair dismissal to an industrial tribunal, subject to the normal two-year qualifying period. However, the Government do not believe that more general legislation is the solution. Indeed, this would be as ineffective as it has been shown to be in other countries and would also increase burdens on business, possibly hampering the creation of new jobs. The way forward is through persuasion and voluntary means.

Finally, in 1994–95 the cost to the Employment Department of activities related to the campaign, including the booklets and research undertaken but excluding internal staff costs, was just over £300,000.

## Unemployment

**Mr. Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women have been unemployed for (i) less than six months, (ii) more than six months, (iii) more than one year, (iv) more than 18 months and (v) more than two years: and if he will provide a breakdown by the age categories *(A)* 35 to 40, *(B)* 40 to 50, *(C)* 50 to 60 and *(D)* 60 to 65 years. [22055]

**Miss Widdecombe:** The latest information available from the labour force survey for Great Britain is given in the following table. Information on levels of claimant unemployment by age and duration of unemployment can be obtained from the NOMIS database in the Library for the following age bands: 35 to 39, 40 to 49, 50 to 59, 60 and over.

*ILO unemployed by age, gender and duration of unemployment*

*Great Britain* — *Autumn 1994* — *Thousands*

| *Age* | *All ILO unemployed* | *Less than 6 months* | *6 months to 1 year* | *1–2 years* | *More than 2 years* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *All persons* | | | | | |
| 35–39 | 235 | 85 | 42 | 35 | 74 |
| 40–49 | 408 | 140 | 62 | 78 | 128 |
| 50–59 | 329 | 90 | 48 | 63 | 128 |
| 60–65 | 88 | 17 | [1]— | 22 | 40 |
| *Males* | | | | | |
| 35–39 | 156 | 43 | 29 | 26 | 58 |
| 40–49 | 255 | 74 | 35 | 50 | 95 |
| 50–59 | 230 | 58 | 34 | 41 | 96 |
| 60–65 | 74 | 13 | [1]— | 19 | 34 |
| *Females* | | | | | |
| 35–39 | 79 | 42 | 13 | 8 | 15 |
| 40–49 | 153 | 66 | 27 | 27 | 33 |
| 50–59 | 100 | 32 | 14 | 22 | 32 |
| 60–65 | 13 | [1]— | [1]— | [1]— | [1]— |

*Notes:*

[1] Estimates below 10,000.

*Source:*

labour force survey—not seasonally adjusted.

### Civil Servants

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the individual value of each *(a)* compulsory early retirement and *(b)* flexible early retirement package received by civil servants leaving his Department on the grounds of limited efficiency in each of the last five years. [22088]

**Miss Widdecombe:** The Department has no record of any such payments having been made.

### South Thames Training and Enterprise Council

**Ms Harman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if the Central London training and enterprise council will pay the debts of South Thames TEC. [22220]

**Mr. Paice:** The debts incurred by South Thames training and enterprise council are a matter for the receiver. It is my understanding that there is no obligation whatsoever upon CENTEC to pay the debts.

### Stapro Insecticide

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 18 April, *Official Report*, column *57*, if he will set out the manufacturer's instructions for the application of Stapro insecticide. [21170]

**Miss Widdecombe** *[holding answer 1 May 1995]:* Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

*Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Andrew Mackinlay, dated 2 May 1995:*

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question regarding the manufacturer's instructions for the application of Stapro Insecticide.

The contractor employed to undertake the spraying at Grays Unemployment Benefit Office on 8 October 1991 has now advised us orally that the chemical used was not a Stapro Insecticide, as he originally told us. He has further advised that any enquiries relation to this operation should be directed to his solicitor, Mr. Michael Wright of Thompson, Smith and Poxon, 4/5 North Hill, Colchester, Essex, CO1 1EB.

You will understand that, given these circumstances, the information relating to Stapro would be inappropriate.

### Asbestos

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the number of convictions in each region under the Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 1987 and the Asbestos (Licensing Regulations) 1983 in each year since their inception, indicating the penalty in each case. [21286]

**Mr. Oppenheim** *[holding answer 1 May 1995]:* I have arranged for the information on the number of convictions in each region under the Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 1987 and the Asbestos (Licensing) Regulations 1983 and the penalties for each conviction to be placed in the Library. The information relates to prosecutions by the Health and Safety Executive. It does not include prosecutions by local authority inspectors who have powers under the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974 to enforce the regulations. Statistics on the number of convictions under the Asbestos (Licensing) Regulations 1983 are available only from 1986 onwards.

### Cleveland Rural Development Area

**Dr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his estimate of *(a)* the number of unemployed and *(b)* the rate of unemployment in the Cleveland rural development area in each of the last 10 years and at the latest available date. [21433]

**Mr. Oppenheim** *[holding answer 1 May 1995]:* Information is available only on the numbers of claimant unemployed people in rural development areas and this can be obtained from the NOMIS database in the Library.

### Manufacturing Employees

**Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the number and percentage of employees who are employed in manufacturing, in each region of the United Kingdom in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* the most recent year for which figures are available. [21796]

**Mr. Oppenheim** *[holding answer 1 May 1995]:* The information requested is shown in the following table:

*Employees in employment in manufacturing industry and as a percentage of all employees in employment*

| *(Thousands)* | *December 1979* | | *December 1994* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Level* | *Percentage* | *Level* | *Percentage* |
| South East (excluding Greater London) | 1,870[1] | 24.8 | 666 | 17.5 |
| Greater London | n/a | n/a | 332 | 10.6 |
| East Anglia | 210 | 29.6 | 161 | 20.0 |
| South West | 440 | 27.7 | 308 | 18.1 |
| West Midlands | 977 | 43.3 | 572 | 28.3 |
| East Midlands | 605 | 38.7 | 454 | 29.4 |
| Yorkshire and Humberside | 699 | 34.8 | 430 | 23.4 |
| North West | 955 | 35.7 | 517 | 22.4 |
| North | 404 | 32.5 | 250 | 22.9 |
| Wales | 314 | 30.4 | 226 | 23.3 |
| Scotland | 596 | 28.5 | 354 | 18.0 |
| Northern Ireland | 143 | 26.6 | 103 | 18.3 |

[1] Employment figures available only for the whole of the south-east region as Greater London was not separately identifiable.
n/a = Not available.

### Parliamentary Questions

**Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the cost of answering the questions to his Department tabled by the hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) since the beginning of the current Session. [18572]

**Mr. Oppenheim** *[holding answer 5 April 1995]:* According to our records, the hon. Member for Makerfield has tabled 180 parliamentary questions to this Department since the beginning of the current parliamentary Session until 4 April 1995. We estimate the total cost of preparing these answers was £17,460.

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

### Visas

**Mr. Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the reasons for the refusal of temporary visas to Mrs. Rasoul Bibi, Ref. V94/20662, and Miss Riffat Sultana, Ref. V94/20668. [21862]

**Mr. Baldry:** The reasons for refusal were given in the migration and visa correspondence unit's letters of 28 July 1994 and 18 October 1994 to my hon. Friend.

**Mr. Stewart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received concerning the request for temporary visas by Mrs. Rasoul Bibi, Ref. V94/20662, and Miss Riffat Sultana, Ref. V94/20668; and if he will make a statement. [21863]

**Mr. Baldry:** Representations have been received from a number of people, including my hon. Friend.

### Nuclear Weapons

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will place in the Library a copy of the United Kingdom presentation to main committee II of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty conference in New York. [22022]

**Mr. David Davis:** Yes.

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many members of the European Union have indicated at the non-proliferation treaty review and extension conference in New York that they seek both an indefinite and unconditional extension to the treaty. [22018]

**Mr. David Davis:** All of them.

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response has been made by the United Kingdom delegation to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty conference in New York, to the proposal advanced by Germany that fissionable material from dismantled weaponry should not be used to build new warheads. [22019]

**Mr. David Davis:** The UK maintains only a minimum deterrent and has no surplus fissile material for explosive purposes. Recycling fissile materials allows us to keep our stockpile of fissile material at the minimum level necessary to meet our operational requirements.

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has received on decisions taken at the meeting of the non-aligned movement member states held in Bandung, Indonesia, on 25 to 27 April in regard to the non-proliferation treaty. [22058]

**Mr. David Davis:** At the end of their meeting in Bandung, the Ministers of the non-aligned states issued a statement. They expressed a number of concerns about the non-proliferation treaty, but accepted that it had played a part in promoting international peace and security. The statement made clear that the NPT will be extended in accordance with article X.2.

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on the adoption by states parties to the non-proliferation treaty, during the treaty's review and extension conference, of a programme of action for achieving complete nuclear disarmament. [21352]

**Mr. David Davis** *[holding answer 1 May 1995]:* Nuclear disarmament is already under way, in particular through agreements between the United States and Russia. It will not be advanced by attempting to impose artificial deadlines or linkages on the negotiating process.

### Caroline Beale

**Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the latest position in the case of Caroline Beale, detained in New York; and what continuing action representatives of his Department are taking in her case. [21836]

**Mr. Baldry:** A further hearing of Miss Beale's case is set for 15 May. Our consular staff visit her regularly and are in frequent contact with her lawyer, the prison authorities and her family.

### Hong Kong

**Mr. Spellar:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 24 April, *Official Report*, column *375*, concerning civil servants in Hong Kong, if the figures given include judges and police officers. [21912]

**Mr. Goodlad:** The figures of £40 million includes compensation payments for judges and police officers who are members of Her Majesty's overseas civil service in Hong Kong.

### Council of Ministers

**Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on forthcoming business in the Council of the European Union.

**Mr. David Davis:** The following meetings are planned:

May 17: Health
May 22: ECOFIN
May 29: FAC
Agriculture
May 30: FAC
Agriculture

The following subjects are likely to be discussed:

*May 17: Health*

No formal agenda is available.

The following subjects may be discussed.

—Europe Against Cancer Programme
—Health Promotion Programme
—Europe Against Aids Programme
—Drugs Programme

*May 22: ECOFIN*

Provisional agenda:

—Regulations in the statistical field (consumer price index, revision of systems of national and regional accounts, Community action in the statistical field)
—Cross-border payments directive
—Trans-European Networks financing

The meeting will be followed by a Joint Council with CEE Finance Ministers.

*May 29, 30: FAC*

Agenda not yet available

*May 29, 30: Agriculture*

—Agrimonetary (possible)
—Extraordinary set-aside penalties
—Price fixing
—Set-aside bio-mass (possible)
—Banana quotas for new member states
—Reform of the fruit and vegetable regime (possible)
—Animal welfare (possible)

## Diplomats (Offences)

**Mr. Elletson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish figures recording the number of unpaid parking fines incurred by diplomatic missions in London during 1994.

**Mr. Baldry:** During 1994, the London diplomatic missions incurred a total of 3,613 unpaid parking fines, which is almost double the 1993 figure of 1,941. This increase, the first since 1986, occurred mainly in the second half of the year when parking in London was decriminalised and responsibility—with the exception of main thoroughfares—was transferred from the Metropolitan police to the 33 London boroughs. This change also coincided with a campaign to reduce the amount of illegal parking in London, which resulted in an increase in the numbers of parking tickets issued to the public, including the diplomatic corps. The table shows only missions which have 11 or more fines outstanding.

*Unpaid Parking Fines*

| *Diplomatic mission* | *1994* | *1993* |
|---|---|---|
| United Arab Emirates | 470 | 51 |
| Angola | 404 | 30 |
| Qatar | 353 | 28 |
| Saudi Arabia | 125 | 60 |
| Nigeria | 118 | 91 |
| India | 79 | 71 |
| Ghana | 76 | 35 |
| Bulgaria | 66 | 34 |
| Oman | 63 | 45 |
| Pakistan | 61 | 54 |
| France | 58 | 25 |
| Sudan | 56 | 39 |
| Gabon | 55 | 23 |
| Jordan | 52 | 50 |
| Egypt | 50 | 35 |
| Bangladesh | 49 | 59 |
| Hungary | 47 | 50 |
| Bahrain | 46 | 29 |
| Kuwait | 45 | 21 |
| Cote D'Ivoire | 40 | 21 |
| Indonesia | 37 | 9 |
| Malaysia | 37 | 15 |
| Brunei | 35 | 22 |
| Poland | 35 | 27 |
| Morocco | 34 | 31 |
| Israel | 33 | 27 |
| Greece | 32 | 46 |
| Thailand | 32 | 32 |
| Spain | 31 | 48 |
| Cuba | 31 | 20 |
| Russia | 31 | 20 |
| Romania | 30 | 25 |
| Cyprus | 29 | 21 |
| Tanzania | 28 | 40 |
| Turkey | 27 | 13 |
| South Africa | 24 | 2 |
| Algeria | 24 | 17 |
| Uganda | 24 | 25 |
| Malawi | 24 | 18 |
| Italy | 23 | 21 |
| United States | 22 | 3 |
| Germany | 22 | 51 |
| Zimbabwe | 21 | 15 |
| Zambia | 20 | 45 |
| Tunisia | 20 | 28 |
| Cameroon | 20 | 35 |
| Philippines | 19 | 17 |
| Portugal | 19 | 12 |
| Afghanistan | 19 | 11 |
| Zaire | 18 | 8 |

*Unpaid Parking Fines*

| *Diplomatic mission* | *1994* | *1993* |
|---|---|---|
| Sierra Leone | 17 | 8 |
| Lesotho | 14 | 11 |
| Japan | 14 | 5 |
| China | 13 | 14 |
| Syria | 13 | 9 |
| Croatia | 13 | 0 |
| Barbados | 13 | 19 |
| Kenya | 13 | 7 |
| Fiji | 12 | 5 |
| Iran | 12 | 7 |
| Iceland | 12 | 3 |
| Botswana | 12 | 6 |
| Uruguay | 12 | 23 |
| Ethiopia | 11 | 2 |
| Peru | 11 | 11 |
| Czech Rep | 11 | 6 |
| *International organisations* | | |
| European Bank for Reconstruction and Development | 19 | 11 |
| International Maritime Organisation | 18 | 0 |
| International Cocoa Organisation | 15 | 12 |
| Commonwealth Secretariat | 11 | 17 |

**Mr. Sykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many serious offences were allegedly committed in 1994 by persons entitled to diplomatic immunity; and how many foreign diplomats or members of their families were withdrawn from their posts in Britain in the past year as a result of alleged offences.

**Mr. Baldry:** Twenty-five alleged serious offences by persons entitled to diplomatic immunity were drawn to the attention of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in 1994. "Serious offences" are defined in accordance with the report to the Foreign Affairs Committee, "The Abuse of Diplomatic Immunities and Privileges (1985)", as offences which fall into the category which in certain circumstances attract a maximum penalty of six months' imprisonment or more: the majority involved drinking and driving or shoplifting.

Six diplomats or members of their families were withdrawn from post in Britain as a result of alleged offences, compared with one the previous year.

## Civil Servants

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the individual value of each *(a)* compulsory early retirement and *(b)* flexible early retirement package received by civil servants leaving his Department on grounds of limited efficiency in each of the last five years. [22086]

**Mr. Goodlad:** Compensation payments for early retirement on grounds of limited efficiency are age, salary and service related. In the Overseas Development Association no early retirements on grounds of limited efficiency have been made during the last five years. The relevant information for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

## Brazil (Killing of Indians)

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will raise with President

Carposa of Brazil when he visits the United Kingdom the killing of Ticuna Indians on 28 March 1990 in Boca de Capacete and urge that those responsible be brought to trial. [22185]

**Mr. David Davis:** The Brazilian authorities are well aware of concern in Britain that the rights and interests of the indigenous peoples of Brazil should be observed. Fourteen Ticuna Indians were killed on 28 March 1988 in the town of Benjamin Constant. The trial has been transferred from the state to the federal courts. It is expected to take place within a year.

### Drugs

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action Her Majesty's Government are taking *(a)* directly, *(b)* through the EU and *(c)* through other organisations to assist the Government of Pakistan in combating drug trafficking; what assistance is being given to the supply of equipment to combat drug trafficking with particular reference to helicopters; and if he will make a statement. [22306]

**Mr. Baldry:** We have given considerable narcotics-related assistance to Pakistan, both bilaterally and through multilateral channels. Last financial year, bilateral assistance included the provision of law enforcement training by Her Majesty Customs and Excise. Multilaterally we have pledged over £8 million since 1985 to projects administered by the United Nations drug control programme to strengthen law enforcement control of the Pakistan/Iran/Afghanistan border area and to reduce the supply of opium through rural development.

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what studies his Department has *(a)* commissioned and *(b)* evaluated in respect of financial inducements to people in Afghanistan to persuade them to cease growing poppies used in the production of drugs. [22304]

**Mr. Baldry:** Afghanistan is now believed by the United Nations drug control programme and others to be the largest producer of illicit opium in the world. Much of the production is trafficked in the form of heroin to western Europe, including the UK.

In present circumstances, action by UNDCP is likely to be more effective in combating illicit drug production in Afghanistan than that by individual countries. The Government have therefore recently contributed £100,000 to preparation by UNCP of a strategy to reduce illicit opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan, and will consider further financial support in the light of the result.

## TRANSPORT

### Civil Servants

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the individual value of each *(a)* compulsory early retirement and *(b)* flexible early retirement package received by civil servants leaving his Department on grounds of limited efficiency in each of the last five years. [22076]

**Mr. Norris:** Compensation payments for early retirement on ground of limited efficiency are age, salary and service related. Details of limited efficiency early retirements for the last five financial years are as follows:

| | *Annual compensation payment to age 60 rate pa* | *Superannuation lump sum* | *Lump sum compensation payment* | *Total in £* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Year 1990–91* | | | | |
| Compulsory | None | None | None | — |
| Flexible | 9674 | 29022 | n/a | 38,696 |
| | 3564 | 1085 | n/a | 4,649 |
| | 3332 | 9093 | n/a | 12,425 |
| *Year 1991–92* | | | | |
| Compulsory | None | None | None | — |
| Flexible | 6088 | 16225 | n/a | 22,313 |
| | FSSU scheme member | — | 6034 | 6,034 |
| | 1628 | 4261 | n/a | 5,889 |
| *Year 1992–93* | | | | |
| Compulsory | 8206 | 21551 | 8154 | 29,757 |
| Flexible | 3591 | 10382 | n/a | 13,973 |
| | 4094 | 10656 | n/a | 14,750 |
| | 4199 | 12169 | n/a | 16,368 |
| | 10876 | 31865 | n/a | 42,741 |
| *Year 1993–94* | | | | |
| Compulsory | None | None | None | — |
| Flexible | 8685 | 23422 | n/a | 32,107 |
| | 4418 | 13178 | n/a | 17,596 |
| | n/a | n/a | 3033 | 3,033 |
| | 4950 | 12987 | n/a | 17,937 |

### Ministerial Visits Overseas

**Mr. Meacher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the visits he has made abroad in the last 12 months; how long he spent in each location; and what was the purpose of each visit. [21422]

**Dr. Mawhinney:** In addition to those listed in the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Byers) on 20 February, *Official Report*, column *4*, I have also undertaken the following visits:

| *Country* | *Duration* | *Purpose* |
|---|---|---|
| Switzerland | 24 hours | Visit to the Swiss Transport Minister |
| Brussels | 2 days | European Transport Council |
| Japan | 4 days | Visits to the Japanese Transport Minister, various railway companies in Tokyo and Nagoya and to banks and leasing companies interested in the sale of British Rail ROSCOs. |
| Korea | 4 days | Wreath laying ceremony Gloster Valley. Visits to the Korean Minister of Transport and Construction, the mayor of Seoul and various Korean companies with potential investments in the UK. Addressed regional British chambers of commerce; Korean Institute of Transport joint UK/Korean seminar; and Korean Ministry of Political Affairs seminar on local government. |

## AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

### Veterinary Medicines Report

**Mr. McLoughlin:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether the 1993 report from the appraisal panel for human suspected adverse reactions to veterinary medicines has now been published. [22403]

**Mrs. Browning:** The report is being published this week and is available free of charge from the Veterinary Medicines Directorate. Copies have been placed in the Library of the House.

## EDUCATION

### Civil Servants

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will list the individual value of each *(a)* compulsory early retirement and *(b)* flexible early retirement package received by civil servants leaving her Department on grounds of limited efficiency in each of the last five years. [22089]

**Mr. Boswell:** There have been no instances of compulsory early retirement on grounds of limited efficiency in the Department.

There has been one instance of flexible early retirement on limited efficiency grounds during the last five financial years, as follows:

| | *Annual compensation payment to age 60 (rate pa)* | *Superannuation lump sum* |
|---|---|---|
| 1994–95 | £4996.67 | £14,255.07 |

### Local Education Authorities

**Mr. Beggs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what were the numbers of staff and the administrative costs incurred by each education authority in England for the year ended 31 March; and what are the projected costs for 1995–96. [21791]

**Mr. Robin Squire:** The table shows, for each LEA in England, staffing expenditure and total expenditure on service strategy and regulation, management and administration and the inspection and advisory service in 1993–94, the latest year for which outturn figures are available. Figures for 25 LEAs are not included as they have yet to be finalised. These figures have not been adjusted for any changes of function. Statistics on LEA administrative staff numbers, broken down by individual authorities, are not available centrally. Cost projections for 1995–96 are unavailable in these areas.

| *LEAs administration and inspection expenditure* *1993–94* | *Staffing cost (cash terms)* *£000* | *Gross expenditure (cash terms)* *£000* |
|---|---|---|
| Corporation of London | 208 | 632 |
| Camden | n/a | n/a |
| Greenwich | 4,250 | 10,969 |
| Hackney | n/a | n/a |
| Hammersmith | n/a | n/a |
| Islington | n/a | n/a |
| Kensington and Chelsea | 1,996 | 4,509 |
| Lambeth | 5,382 | 12,322 |
| Lewisham | n/a | n/a |
| Southwark | 3,806 | 8,771 |
| Tower Hamlets | 7,273 | 17,193 |
| Wandsworth | 3,179 | 5,533 |
| Westminster | 2,049 | 7,476 |
| Barking | n/a | n/a |
| Barnet | 2,406 | 4,523 |
| Bexley | 2,568 | 4,806 |
| Brent | 3,420 | 7,233 |
| Bromley | 2,876 | 5,073 |
| Croydon | 4,495 | 8,087 |
| Ealing | 4,043 | 8,714 |
| Enfield | n/a | n/a |
| Haringey | 4,918 | 5,429 |
| Harrow | n/a | n/a |
| Havering | 2,030 | 3,998 |
| Hillingdon | 2,871 | 5,184 |
| Hounslow | 1,867 | 3,596 |
| Kingston upon Thames | 1,865 | 2,963 |
| Merton | n/a | n/a |
| Newham | 3,189 | 5,248 |
| Redbridge | 1,505 | 2,806 |
| Richmond upon Thames | n/a | n/a |
| Sutton | 4,609 | 5,788 |
| Waltham Forest | 4,409 | 8,178 |
| Birmingham | 10,012 | 19,298 |

| LEAs administration and inspection expenditure 1993–94 | Staffing cost (cash terms) £000 | Gross expenditure (cash terms) £000 |
|---|---|---|
| Coventry | 6,428 | 11,206 |
| Dudley | n/a | n/a |
| Sandwell | 3,860 | 4,893 |
| Solihull | 1,167 | 2,245 |
| Walsall | 2,574 | 6,048 |
| Wolverhampton | n/a | n/a |
| Knowsley | n/a | n/a |
| Liverpool | n/a | n/a |
| St. Helens | 1,598 | 3,137 |
| Sefton | n/a | n/a |
| Wirral | n/a | n/a |
| Bolton | 3,025 | 5,976 |
| Bury | n/a | n/a |
| Manchester | 4,531 | 8,622 |
| Oldham | 2,673 | 5,307 |
| Rochdale | 1,511 | 3,021 |
| Salford | n/a | n/a |
| Stockport | 2,143 | 4,236 |
| Tameside | 1,382 | 2,729 |
| Trafford | n/a | n/a |
| Wigan | 2,036 | 4,209 |
| Barnsley | 2,707 | 5,297 |
| Doncaster | 2,915 | 5,004 |
| Rotherham | 3,590 | 4,852 |
| Sheffield | 3,933 | 7,249 |
| Bradford | 6,452 | 8,328 |
| Calderdale | 1,320 | 3,344 |
| Kirklees | n/a | n/a |
| Leeds | 7,320 | 12,790 |
| Wakefield | 2,835 | 5,592 |
| Gateshead | 1,886 | 4,534 |
| Newcastle upon Tyne | n/a | n/a |
| North Tyneside | 991 | 1,948 |
| South Tyneside | 2,883 | 5,501 |
| Sunderland | 1,874 | 3,844 |
| Isles of Scilly | 40 | 42 |
| Avon | 5,248 | 15,893 |
| Bedfordshire | 4,843 | 7,791 |
| Berkshire | n/a | n/a |
| Buckinghamshire | 5,553 | 14,651 |
| Cambridgeshire | 3,860 | 9,222 |
| Cheshire | 10,185 | 21,479 |
| Cleveland | 3,814 | 5,477 |
| Cornwall | 3,449 | 10,526 |
| Cumbria | 3,468 | 7,357 |
| Derbyshire | 5,579 | 7,878 |
| Devon | 7,687 | 14,207 |
| Dorset | 4,376 | 11,559 |
| Durham | 3,681 | 8,329 |
| East Sussex | 4,678 | 11,230 |
| Essex | 342 | 8,021 |
| Gloucestershire | n/a | n/a |
| Hampshire | n/a | n/a |
| Hereford and Worcester | 1,825 | 4,410 |
| Hertfordshire | 5,239 | 12,604 |
| Humberside | n/a | n/a |
| Isle of Wight | 1,205 | 4,064 |
| Kent | 5,142 | 12,170 |
| Lancashire | 9,448 | 23,197 |
| Leicestershire | 6,642 | 14,764 |
| Lincolnshire | 2,848 | 8,880 |
| Norfolk | 2,358 | 7,837 |
| North Yorkshire | 3,980 | 10,756 |
| Northamptonshire | 1,679 | 9,148 |
| Northumberland | 2,917 | 7,739 |
| Nottinghamshire | 8,222 | 22,719 |
| Oxfordshire | 4,528 | 9,313 |
| Shropshire | 3,480 | 5,135 |
| Somerset | 6,495 | 12,355 |
| Staffordshire | 1,660 | 4,669 |
| Suffolk | 4,519 | 8,957 |
| Surrey | 6,222 | 16,427 |
| Warwickshire | 4,875 | 11,874 |
| West Sussex | 4,544 | 11,124 |
| Wiltshire | 4,271 | 11,430 |

n/a = Not yet available.

**Mr. Beggs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will publish a list of education authorities in England and Northern Ireland with the total number of pupils for which each education authority was responsible in the year ended 31 March. [21805]

**Mr. Robin Squire:** Information on the number of pupils in schools maintained by local education authorities in England in January 1994 is shown in the table. Pupil numbers in Northern Ireland are a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

*All pupils in LEA-maintained Nursery, Primary, Secondary and Special schools [1] in England*

| Local Education Authority | [1]Pupils |
|---|---|
| Corporation of London | 214 |
| Camden | 19,610 |
| Greenwich | 36,441 |
| Hackney | 25,049 |
| Hammersmith | 14,753 |
| Islington | 23,517 |
| Kensington and Chelsea | 8,967 |
| Lambeth | 21,864 |
| Lewisham | 32,007 |
| Southwark | 28,775 |
| Tower Hamlets | 33,954 |
| Wandsworth | 20,241 |
| Westminster | 17,033 |
| Barking | 26,030 |
| Barnet | 33,906 |
| Bexley | 31,055 |
| Brent | 26,718 |
| Bromley | 28,160 |
| Croydon | 38,213 |
| Ealing | 32,664 |
| Enfield | 36,327 |
| Haringey | 29,608 |
| Harrow | 27,374 |
| Havering | 31,341 |
| Hillingdon | 20,043 |
| Hounslow | 32,403 |
| Kingston upon Thames | 15,863 |
| Merton | 23,232 |
| Newham | 40,255 |
| Redbridge | 34,393 |
| Richmond upon Thames | 19,038 |
| Sutton | 17,750 |
| Waltham Forest | 30,642 |
| Birmingham | 1,63,079 |
| Coventry | 49,913 |
| Dudley | 43,366 |
| Sandwell | 511,108 |
| Solihull | 33,368 |
| Walsall | 43,020 |
| Wolverhampton | 40,552 |
| Knowsley | 27,992 |
| Liverpool | 81,934 |
| St. Helens | 29,946 |
| Sefton | 47,168 |
| Wirral | 51,857 |

*All pupils in LEA-maintained Nursery, Primary, Secondary and Special schools [1] in England*

| *Local Education Authority* | *[1]Pupils* |
|---|---|
| Bolton | 42,429 |
| Bury | 27,81'4 |
| Manchester | 70,796 |
| Oldham | 41,653 |
| Rochdale | 34,020 |
| Salford | 35,883 |
| Stockport | 42,970 |
| Tameside | 35,107 |
| Trafford | 29,833 |
| Wigan | 50,621 |
| Barnsley | 34,578 |
| Doncaster | 52,032 |
| Rotherham | 44,190 |
| Sheffield | 70,775 |
| Bradford | 83,406 |
| Calderdale | 28,728 |
| Kirklees | 62,567 |
| Leeds | 113,062 |
| Wakefield | 51,922 |
| Gateshead | 30,558 |
| Newcastle upon Tyne | 40,749 |
| North Tyneside | 31,660 |
| South Tyneside | 26,397 |
| Sunderland | 51,321 |
| Isles of Scilly | 291 |
| Avon | 1,37,357 |
| Bedfordshire | 81,360 |
| Berkshire | 1,03,502 |
| Buckinghamshire | 90,109 |
| Cambridgeshire | 84,515 |
| Cheshire | 1,53,008 |
| Cleveland | 1,03,146 |
| Cornwall | 69,977 |
| Cumbria | 65,372 |
| Derbyshire | 1,28,591 |
| Devon | 1,36,651 |
| Dorset | 78,626 |
| Durham | 97,711 |
| East Sussex | 88,025 |
| Essex | 1,46,390 |
| Gloucestershire | 56,666 |
| Hampshire | 2,01,345 |
| Hereford and Worcester | 94,445 |
| Hertfordshire | 1,37,829 |
| Humberside | 1,43,600 |
| Isle of Wight | 17,955 |
| Kent | 1,83,670 |
| Lancashire | 2,14,486 |
| Leicestershire | 1,38,347 |
| Lincolnshire | 66,722 |
| Norfolk | 93,702 |
| North Yorkshire | 1,04,727 |
| Northamptonshrie | 85,417 |
| Northumberland | 51,019 |
| Nottinghamshire | 1,56,816 |
| Oxfordshire | 78,400 |
| Shropshire | 57,984 |
| Somerset | 64,487 |
| Staffordshire | 1,63,143 |
| Suffolk | 93,282 |
| Surrey | 1,07,933 |
| Warwickshire | 68,726 |
| West Sussex | 94,854 |
| Wiltshire | 70,552 |
| England | 6,764,552 |

[1] This is the total of all full-time and part-time pupils of all ages.

### University and Private Sector Co-operation

**Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what new initiatives she is discussing with the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principles to encourage senior private sector managers to spend time in university departments. [21826]

**Mr. Boswell:** No such discussions are taking place. These are matters for the CVCP and its member institutions to arrange in collaboration with companies. The Government welcome opportunities that enable industrial and university personnel to share their experiences for the benefit of the economy.

**Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what programmes she supports to encourage the release of university staff to spend time in manufacturing industry. [21825]

**Mr. Boswell:** We support all initiatives that provide academic and industrial staff with opportunities to collaborate. Responsibility for developing links with business, of all kinds, rests with individual institutions. Many are conscious of the need to do so, and participate in the range of programmes promoted by the Departments of Employment and of Trade and Industry and the Office for Science and Technology.

### Nursery Places

**Ms Hodge:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many places she will need to find to meet the Prime Minister's commitment to nursery places for all four-year-olds. [22014]

**Mr. Forth:** In January 1994, the size of the four-year-old cohort in England was estimated at 645,000. Latest available data suggest that at that time an estimated 498,000 four-year-olds were attending maintained schools. We estimate that approximately 120,000 more were in some form of private or voluntary provision.

### Distance Learning

**Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education when she will next meet the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals to discuss the use of new technologies for distance learning. [21822]

**Mr. Boswell:** My right hon. Friend has no current plans to meet the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals in order to discuss the use of new technologies for distance learning. She has, however, recently issued a consultation document on the future of broadband communications in education, and would welcome the committee's comments on it.

### Pupils and Teachers, Ealing

**Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many pupils are currently in *(a)* primary schools and *(b)* secondary/high schools in Ealing in (i) local education authority and (ii) grant-maintained schools; how many teachers are currently employed to teach them in whatever capacity; and if she will make a statement. [22011]

**Mr. Robin Squire:** The information requested for 1994, the latest date for which information is available, is shown in the table.

*Full-time equivalent of pupils and qualified teachers in maintained schools in Ealing Local Education Authority area January 1994*

| | *LEA maintained schools* | | *Grant-maintained schools* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Primary* | *Secondary* | *Primary* | *Secondary* |
| Pupils[1] | 22,836 | 7,369 | 1,201 | 6,111 |
| Teachers[2] | 1,076 | 456 | 55 | 374 |

[1] Each part-time pupil counts as 0.5 full-time equivalents.[2] Includes the FTE of part-time qualified teachers.

### Equal Opportunities

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what progress has been made within her Department on equal opportunities matters. [21456]

**Mr. Boswell:** The Department is committed to achieving equality of opportunity for all staff. To that end, programmes for action for staff with disabilities, women and staff from ethnic minorities are in place, and progress has been made in all areas.

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education which Minister in her Department has responsibility for equal opportunities issues. [21455]

**Mr. Boswell:** I have responsibility for equal opportunities issues in the Department.

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will publish the gender assessment being prepared by her Department. [21457]

**Mr. Boswell:** Equal opportunities issues are under continuous scrutiny within the Department. My right hon. Friend has drawn attention in recent speeches to the remarkable progress which has been made by girls and women in education over the last 15 years. No additional gender assessment is being prepared.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

### Electricity

**Mr. McGrady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when competition will be introduced to the supply of electricity services in Northern Ireland. [21123]

**Mr. Ancram:** The Director General of Electricity Supply for Northern Ireland has responsibility for the development of competition in the supply of electricity. Following the publication of his plans for this on 16 December 1993 the director general intends to publish formal consultation documents in June 1995. A copy of his 1993 report can be obtained from Offer (Northern Ireland).

### Animal Diseases

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many cases of vesicular stomatitis occurred in each year since 1985. [21138]

**Mr. Ancram:** None.

**Mr. Jamieson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment has been made of the effectiveness of a cattle blood test for TB; and if a fully substantiated case can be made to the European Union to obtain agreement to its use. [21715]

**Mr. Ancram:** The Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland recently undertook a major field trial on the development of a blood test for TB and the results of the trial are currently being evaluated. If these show that the development of a blood test is viable, a case will be made to the European Union to have the test approved for use in Northern Ireland.

### Equal Opportunities

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress has been made within his Department on equal opportunities matters. [21476]

**Sir John Wheeler:** Progress on equal opportunities matters in relation to staff in the Northern Ireland civil service is detailed in regularly published reports of the service's equal opportunities unit. The home civil service cadre of the Northern Ireland Office is included in regular reports on equal opportunities published by the Cabinet Office. Copies of the reports are placed in the Library.

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland which Minister in his Department has responsibility for equal opportunities issues. [21475]

**Mr. Ancram:** My noble Friend Baroness Denton has the lead role for equal opportunities issues in Northern Ireland and represents Northern Ireland Departments and the Northern Ireland Office at the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Women's Issues. The Minister of State, my hon. Friend the Minister for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler), has lead responsibility for equal opportunity matters within the Northern Ireland civil service.

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish the gender assessment being prepared by his Department. [21477]

**Mr. Ancram:** Revised Government guidelines on policy appraisal fair treatment, which came into effect on 1 January 1994, aim to ensure that in the development or review of policies and programmes Departments and agencies do not unfairly or unnecessarily discriminate against specified sections of the community, including people of different gender. Annual reports on the implementation of the policy appraisal and fair treatment initiative will be published. The first of these is being prepared.

### Stevens Report

**Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects to receive the report from Mr. John Stevens into the shoot to kill inquiry; and if he plans to make an oral statement thereon to the House. [21737]

**Sir John Wheeler:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave on 11 January 1995 to the hon. Member for Islington, North *Official Report*, columns *147–48*. In addition, a further report was submitted on 24 January 1995. A direction of no prosecutions was issued on 17 February 1995. I do not propose to make a statement.

### Invalidity Benefit

**Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what is his latest estimate of the

number of suspensions of increased invalidity benefit awarded as a result of Commissioner Skinner's decision, case C 527/91; and of those women who have experienced suspension, how many have applied to have the suspension of payment lifted on the basis of hardship; how many of these appeals were successful; what has been the cost of the lifting of such suspensions; and if he will make a statement; [21042]

(2) what estimate he has made of the number of women who will be entitled *(a)* to enhanced invalidity benefit payments and *(b)* to back payment if the Department of Social Security's appeal against Commissioner Skinner's decision in the case of Mrs. Rose Graham fails; what estimate he has made of the additional cost to be met by the Northern Ireland Office in (i) 1995–96, (ii) 1996–97, and (iii) 1997–98; and if he will make a statement. [21043]

**Mr. Moss:** Responsibility for the subject in question has been delegated to the Social Security Agency under its chief executive, Mr. Alec Wylie. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

*Letter from Alec Wylie to Dr. Norman Godman, dated 28 April 1995:*

I have been asked to reply to both your recent Parliamentary Questions on the position relating to the payment of increased Invalidity Benefit as a result of the Commissioner's decision in the Rose Graham case.

The latest estimate of the number of suspensions of increased Invalidity Benefit awarded as a result of the Commissioner's decision is 600. No records are kept on the number of women who asked to have their suspension lifted on the grounds of hardship but I can confirm that a total of 8 such requests were successful, the cost of which to date is £27,936.

It is estimated that 4,000 women will be entitled to enhanced Invalidity Benefit and back payment if the Department of Social Security's appeal against the Commissioner's decision fails. The additional cost of these cases is estimated at £2.1 million for 1995/96 and £2.2 million for each of the years 1996/97 and 1997/98.

I hope you will find this information helpful.

### Civil Servants

**Mr. Alan Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the individual value of each *(a)* compulsory early retirement and *(b)* flexible early retirement package received by civil servants leaving his Department on grounds of limited efficiency in each of the last five years. [22080]

**Sir John Wheeler:** Compensation payments for early retirement on grounds of limited efficiency are based on age, salary and service length of the civil servant concerned.

No civil servant who left the Northern Ireland Office or any other Northern Ireland Department in the period 1 April 1990 to 31 March 1995 qualified for flexible early retirement benefits on grounds of limited efficiency.

Unfortunately, due to the large number of officers who left under compulsory early retirement terms in the same period, the number and details of those who left on grounds of limited efficiency could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

### Endangered Species

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the population of *(a)* pine martens, *(b)* peregrine falcons, *(c)* hen harriers and *(d)* sparrowhawks in each year since 1980; and what is his estimate of the amount of damage each species does to game birds. [21847]

**Mr. Moss:** Figures are not available for the population of pine martens.

A census of peregrine falcons took place in 1981 and again in 1991, when there were 53 and 99 pairs respectively. Precise information is not available for hen harriers or sparrowhawks, but it is estimated that currently there are fewer than 20 pairs of hen harriers and between 9,000 and 10,000 pairs of sparrowhawks. No information is available on the amount of damage each species does to game birds.

### Conflicts of Interest

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on how many occasions during the last five years *(a)* civil servants and *(b)* special advisers in his Department or its agencies have declared conflicts of interest; and how many instructions have been issued about their retention, disposal or management. [21391]

**Sir John Wheeler** *[holding answer 1 May 1995]:* For the Department and agencies for which my right hon. and learned Friend is responsible, any conflict of interest involving a civil servant would have been dealt with in accordance with the established guidance. Records of the number of cases are not held centrally.

In the last five years, no special advisers have declared a conflict of interest.

### Public Bodies

**Dr. Wright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland which of the advisory non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department are under a statutory requirement to *(a)* publish their advice to the Government, *(b)* publish an annual report and *(c)* lay an annual report before Parliament; and if he will list those bodies with a statutory base. [21158]

**Sir John Wheeler** *[holding answer 27 April 1995]:* The information requested is as follows:

| | *Statutory requirement to* | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Advisory non-departmental public bodies* | *publish their advice to the Government* | *publish an annual report before Parliament* | *Lay an annual report before Parliament* | *Statutory base* |
| Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Boundary Commission | Yes | No | No | Yes |
| Advisory Committee of the Therapeutic Professions Allied to Medicine | No | No | No | Yes |
| Central Dental Advisory Committee | No | No | No | Yes |
| Central Medical Advisory Committee | No | No | No | Yes |

| Advisory non-departmental public bodies | Statutory requirement to: publish their advice to the Government | publish an annual report before Parliament | Lay an annual report before Parliament | Statutory base |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Central Nursing Advisory Committee | No | No | No | Yes |
| Central Personal Social Services Advisory Committee | No | No | No | Yes |
| Central Pharmaceutical Advisory Committee | No | No | No | Yes |
| Charities Advisory Committee | No | No | No | Yes |
| Clinical Engineering and Medical Physics Services Advisory Committee | No | No | No | Yes |
| Clinical Imaging Services Advisory Committee | No | No | No | Yes |
| Disability Living Allowances Advisory Board for Northern Ireland | No | No | No | Yes |
| Distinction and Meritorious Service Awards Committee for Northern Ireland | No | No | No | Yes |
| Laboratory Services Advisory Committee | No | No | No | Yes |
| Poisons Board | No | No | No | Yes |
| Drainage Council for Northern Ireland | No | No | No | Yes |
| Northern Ireland Water Council | No | No | No | Yes |
| Local Government Staff Commission for Northern Ireland | No | No | No | Yes |
| Northern Ireland Building Regulation Advisory Committee | No | No | No | Yes |
| Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside | No | No | No | Yes |
| Historic Buildings Council | No | No | No | Yes |
| Historic Monuments Council | No | No | No | Yes |
| Industrial Development Board | No | No | No | Yes |
| Training and Employment Agency | No | No | No | Yes |
| Health and Safety Agency | No | No | No | Yes |
| Statistics Advisory Committee | No | No | No | Yes |
| Committees for the Employment of Disabled People | No | No | No | Yes |
| Industrial Research and Technology Board | No | No | No | Yes |

In respect of all other advisory non-departmental public bodies in Northern Ireland, the answer is nil.

**Mr. John D. Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the individuals who are members of more than one Northern Ireland quango and the names of those quangos. [20649]

**Sir John Wheeler** *[holding answer 24 April 1995]:* The information in respect of non-departmental public bodies has been placed in the Library. This does not include details of membership of the Police Authority for Northern Ireland, other than for the chairman.

### Extradition (Irish Republic)

**Mr. Trimble:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps have been or are being taken to secure the extradition from the Irish Republic of Eamon Collins, Len Hardy, Kiernan McBride, Mickey Collins and David Ewins for the IRA terrorist murders and attempted murders described in the Central TV programme "Network First: Confession." [20331]

**Sir John Wheeler** *[holding answer 25 April 1995]:* Following the broadcast of the programme "Network First: Confession" on 18 April 1995, the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary has directed that the programme be examined in detail by the serious crime squad. When investigations are complete, a file will be sent to the Director of Public Prosecutions for Northern Ireland, who will consider the matter. The question of extradition does not arise until the DPP(NI) has decided whether or not to prosecute the person concerned.

## SOCIAL SECURITY

### Refugees

**Mr. Jim Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what studies he has made to examine the effect of reductions in benefits on refugees; [19459]

(2) what recent representations he has received regarding reduced benefits for refugees while their status is being investigated by the Home Office; [19457]

(3) what proposals he has to take remedial action in respect of the reductions of benefits for genuine refugees. [19458]

**Mr. Roger Evans:** None. There is no reduction in the amount of benefits paid to genuine refugees who have been granted asylum by the Secretary of State.

### Housing Benefit

**Mr. Rooker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how much housing benefit he estimates is paid to claimants who own property which is let but in which they do not live; [20345]

(2) if he will bring forward amendments to the housing benefit regulations to prevent people who own dwellings for which they receive a rent from receiving housing benefit in respect of a dwelling they occupy and which is rented from a housing association. [20347]

**Mr. Roger Evans:** Information regarding the amount of housing benefit paid to claimants who own property which is let but in which they do not live is not available. Housing benefit is payable in such cases provided there is a liability to pay rent on the dwelling which is occupied as the home and that liability has not been contrived to take advantage of the housing benefit scheme.

**Ms Coffey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to exclude sheltered accommodation for the elderly and special accommodation for other special needs groups provided by housing associations from the proposed changes to housing benefit based on a calculation of an average area rent. [22218]

**Mr. Roger Evans:** We await the report from the Social Security Advisory Committee following its public consultation exercise on our proposals for housing benefit changes from October. We shall consider the report, together with representations received, including those from our own consultation with the local authority associations, carefully before reaching final decisions.

### Pensions Bill

**Mr. Dewar:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 5 April, *Official Report*, column *1224*, on what basis he estimates that the amendment to the Pensions Bill [*Lords*] which would base the calculation of entitlement to benefits under the state earnings-related pension scheme on the best 44 years of earnings would cost £2.5 billion per year by the middle of the 21st century. [21719]

**Mr. Arbuthnot:** The estimate assumed that a best 44 years rule would apply in a manner similar to the original best 20 years rule. In particular, it was assumed that the selection of the best 44 years would include earnings factors derived from contracted-out as well as not contracted-out earnings, so that the proposal would cover all class 1 contributors.

The estimate took account of the extent to which the average surplus earnings factor increases as a result of removing the lowest earnings factors from the calculation for new awards for 2023–24 and later years once contributors can have more than 44 years of contributions from 1978–79 onwards.

### Civil Servants

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the individual value of each *(a)* compulsory early retirement and *(b)* flexible early retirement package received by civil servants leaving his Department on grounds of limited efficiency in each of the last five years. [22078]

**Mr. Hague:** The information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

### War Widows Pensions

**Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security in what circumstances a war widow living abroad will not be eligible for the war widows pension under the provisions announced in his oral statement on 24 April, *Official Report*, column *532*. [21852]

**Mr. Arbuthnot:** The legal provisions for war widows and war disablement pensions apply equally wherever the pensioner happens to live.

### Young People

**Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the annual savings to the Exchequer from removing the entitlement to income support for young people between the ages of 16 and 18 years. [22273]

**Mr. Roger Evans:** Young people aged 18 years are entitled to income support under the normal rules; 16 and 17-year-olds not required to be available for work are similarly entitled.

Since 1988, unemployed 16 and 17-year-olds have had the more positive option of youth training in place of dependence on benefit. Reliable estimates of the number of claims that would have been made by this group under the previous arrangements are not practicable. They would be dependent on a variety of economic and other assumptions.

### Child Benefit

**Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he has made of the cost of raising the level of child benefit by £5 per week for the first child only. [22296]

**Mr. Burt:** It is estimated that the net cost would be £1.4 billion at 1995–96 prices.

## DUCHY OF LANCASTER

### Equal Opportunities

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what progress has been made within his Department on equal opportunities matters. [21502]

**Mr. Horam:** Substantial progress both within the Department and in promoting equal opportunities throughout the civil service.

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what progress he hopes to achieve in his Department over the next three months to push forwards the declaration signed in October 1994 at the Vienna conference in preparation for the fourth UN conference on women; and if he will agree to incorporate a section on equal opportunities in his Department's annual report. [21504]

**Mr. Horam:** The Government are committed to the principles set out in the regional platform for action agreed at the preparatory conference in Vienna for the fourth UN world conference on women. They have taken these forward through a wide range of programmes and initiatives and will continue to do so.

The Government White Paper "Taking Forward Continuity and Change", published in response to a report from the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee, recommended that Departments and agencies publish their individual actions and progress on equal opportunities in their annual reports. The Departments and agencies for which my right hon. Friend is responsible will be taking this forward.

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will publish the gender assessment being prepared by his Department. [21503]

**Mr. Horam:** The Cabinet Office—Office of Public Service and Science—has a policy, in line with guidance issued in 1992 by the ministerial group on women's issues, that policy proposals should ensure that unlawful or unjustifiable sex or race discrimination does not occur and that similar principles apply to people with disabilities, older people or ex-offenders. Policy advice to Ministers is continuously and routinely scrutinised in these respects.

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster which Minister in his Department has responsibility for equal opportunities issues. [21501]

**Mr. Horam:** I do.

## NATIONAL HERITAGE

### Equal Opportunities

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage which Minister in his Department has responsibility for equal opportunities issues. [21485]

**Mr. Dorrell:** The Minister with responsibility for equal opportunities issues in my Department is the Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich (Mr. Sproat).

### Allowances

**Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the total amount paid by his central Department and each agency for which he is responsible in subsistence allowances for travel *(a)* within the United Kingdom and *(b)* outside the United Kingdom in each of the last three years. [19558]

**Mr. Dorrell:** The Department of National Heritage was created in April 1992. It has two agencies—the Royal Parks agency created in April 1993 and the Historic Royal Palaces agency created in October 1989. The information requested for travel and subsistence—it is not possible to disaggregate the two—is shown in the following table:

| | *Travel and subsistence within the UK* £ | *Travel and subsistence outside the UK* £ |
|---|---|---|
| *DNH central department* | | |
| 1992–93[1] | Figures not available | Figures not available |
| 1993–94 | 105,215 03 | 87,016.56 |
| 1994–95[2] | 100,062 59 | 156,896.27 |
| *RPA* | | |
| 1992–93 | Not applicable | Not applicable |
| 1993–94 | 37,867 26 | Nil |
| 1994–95[2] | 21,192.74 | Nil |
| *HRPA*[3] | | |
| 1992–93 | 25,500 00 | |
| 1993–94 | 20,400 00 | |
| 1993–95[2] | 31,326.82 | |

*Notes:*

[1] DNH did not have its own financial and management accounting arrangements in place until August 1992; for the year 1992–93, the information is therefore not available in the format requested.

[2] The 1994–95 figures, for year ending 31 March 1995, may change slightly as year-end accounts are finalised.

[3] For HRPA expenditure, separate totals for UK and overseas travel and subsistence are not available.

### Aerial Archaeology

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list for *(a)* each of the last four years and *(b)* this year to date the grant issued in respect of aerial archaeology, indicating the name and locations of the recipients; and if he will make a statement. [20715]

**Mr. Dorrell:** Annual figures for grants for aerial archaeology in England made available through the Royal Commission on the historical monuments of England are set out in the table. Details of all grants are published in the commission's annual report. The national library of air photographs is held by the commission at its headquarters in Swindon, and copies of all photographs funded by grants are readily available for consultation.

Aerial archaeology plays an important part in identifying archaeological remains. However, the grants made for flying costs depend partly on the availability of funds from other sources to meet associated costs; and there will be yearly fluctuations in view of its dependence on weather conditions. Post reconnaissance mapping to a high standard is important if the evidence derived from aerial photography is to be fully utilised, and the increased funding for mapping during 1992–93 and 1993–94 reflected the aim of establishing a national programme of mapping the information obtained from this source.

*Summary of grants for aerial archaeology*

| | *1991–92* £ | *1992–93* £ | *1993–94* £ | *1994–95* £ | [1]*1995–96* £ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Reconnaissance | 19,225 | 26,577 | 23,170 | 23,307 | 14,800 |
| Mapping | 34,650 | 115,354 | 106,044 | 63,410 | 43,000 |
| Total | 53,875 | 141,931 | 129,214 | 86,717 | 57,800 |

[1] Provisional.

### Civil Servants

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the individual value of each *(a)* compulsory early retirement and *(b)* flexible early retirement package received by civil servants leaving his Department on grounds of limited efficiency in each of the last five years. [22081]

**Mr. Dorrell:** No early retirements on the ground of limited efficiency have been made since the Department was created in April 1992.

**Mr. Ainger:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many civil service appointments were made to administrative assistant and administrative officer posts in his Department and the agencies for which he is accountable in each quarter from September 1993 until April 1995. [21763]

**Mr. Dorrell** *[holding answer 1 May 1995]:* The Department of National Heritage and its two agencies, the Historic Royal Palaces agency and Royal Parks agency have made the following appointments at the administrative assistant and administrative officer grades since September 1993. The figures exclude short-term casual appointments.

| | *September 1993* | *October-December* | *January-March* | *April-June* | *July-September* | *October-December* | *January-March* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *DNH* | | | | | | | |
| AOs | nil | nil | nil | nil | nil | nil | nil |
| AAs | 4 | 5 | nil | nil | nil | nil | 9 |
| *RPA* | | | | | | | |
| AOs | nil | 1 | nil | 1 | nil | 3 | 1 |
| AAs | nil | nil | nil | nil | nil | 1 | nil |
| *HRPA* | | | | | | | |
| AOs | nil | nil | nil | nil | 2 | 1 | nil |
| AAs | 1 | nil | nil | nil | nil | nil | nil |

### Blue Plaques

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) what are the current planning instructions issued to local authorities in respect of blue plaque schemes denoting historical places of interest; and if he will make a statement; [20708]

(2) what representations he has received in respect of the blue plaque placed by Calderdale district council on the Old Bridge inn at Ripponden, West Yorkshire; and if he will make a statement. [20713]

**Mr. Dorrell:** I have not received any representations about the plaque on the Old Bridge inn. No instructions have been issued to local authorities by my Department in respect of plaques which they or others choose to affix to buildings to mark their historical interest. Apart from the blue plaque scheme for London, which is administered by English Heritage, it is the responsibility of those who wish to place commemorative plaques on buildings to ensure their historical accuracy and to obtain any necessary listed building consents.

### Churchill Papers

**Mr. Fisher:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the name of foreign organisations or individuals who are *(a)* bidding for and (b) negotiating with the trustees for the purchase of the Churchill Trust papers. [22302]

**Mr. Dorrell:** There are no foreign bidders negotiating with the Churchill trustees; the papers have already been secured for the nation.

**Mr. Fisher:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if the Churchill Trust owned the copyright in the Churchill archives; and if Her Majesty's Government have purchased all copyright in these documents. [22301]

**Mr. Dorrell:** Copyright in the non-state papers remains with whoever owned it prior to the sale of the documents to Churchill college. The Crown has retained its copyright in the state papers which it has given to the college.

### Inheritance Tax

**Mr. Faulds:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will specify the amounts of inheritance tax or its equivalent satisfied in connection with the acceptance of objects and property which have been covered in the public accounts by means of resort to the reserve in respect of each of the last 10 financial years; and what was the average annual figure of resort to the reserve for that purpose over the 10-year period in question. [20246]

**Mr. Dorrell:** The amount of tax satisfied in accepting works of art or land and buildings in lieu of tax through the public expenditure reserve over the last 10 years is as follows:

| | £ |
|---|---|
| 1985–86 | 1,367,600 |
| 1986–87 | 1,745,500 |
| 1987–88 | 7,338,444 |
| 1988–89 | 5,584,674 |
| 1989–90 | 9,977,898 |
| 1990–91 | — |
| 1991–92 | 2,144,172 |
| 1992–93 | 4,324,875 |
| 1993–94 | 1,114,660 |
| 1994–95 | 3,759,616 |

The average annual resort to the reserve over this 10-year period was £3,735,744.

### Market Testing

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will estimate the cost of employing consultants in connection with market-testing programmes in which his Department has been engaged since their inception. [21373]

**Mr. Dorrell** *[holding answer 1 May 1995]:* Since it was established in April 1992, my Department and its two agencies have to date spent approximately £66,000 on consultancy relating to market testing. Most of this sum was in connection with a scoping study on the strategic contracting out of central services.

### Hospitality

**Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how much was spent on official hospitality by his Department in 1994–95. [21205]

**Mr. Dorrell** *[holding answer 1 May 1995]:* The information requested is as follows:

| | *Department of National Heritage* £ | *Historic Royal Palaces Agency* £ | *Royal Parks Agency* £ |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1994–95 | 14,967 | 16,313 | 23,862 |

### Advisory Council on Libraries

**Mr. Berry:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if all the councillor members of the Advisory Council on Libraries are elected members of local authorities with responsibilities for library provision. [21564]

**Mr. Sproat** *[holding answer 1 May 1995]:* Five members of the advisory council are elected members of local authorities and were appointed after consultation with the relevant local authority associations. Four are members of local authorities with current responsibilities for public library provision. The fifth is a member of Bath district council and was appointed in recognition of the fact that certain districts, including Bath, will from 1 April 1996 form all or part of new unitary authorities which will take on responsibility for public libraries.

### Mar Lodge Estate

**Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) if he will make it his policy that any grant to the National Trust for Scotland for the purchase of the Mar Lodge estate carries as a condition that public access is not restricted because of hunting and shooting; [21995]

(2) if he will ensure that any grant to the National Trust for Scotland for the purchase of the Mar Lodge estate carries as a condition the protection of nesting birds from hunting and shooting parties. [21996]

**Mr. Dorrell** *[holding answer 1 May 1995]:* Directions have been issued under section 26(3) of the National Lottery etc. Act 1993 concerning the conditions to be applied to grants made from lottery funds by the national heritage memorial fund in order to secure their proper management and control. The application of other conditions is a matter for the NHMF.

### National Lottery

**Dr. Marek:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will publish titles of projects rejected by the millennium fund. [21932]

**Mr. Sproat** *[holding answer 1 May 1995]:* This is a matter for the Millennium Commission. I understand that information on proposals and applications received by the Millennium Commission will be made available by the end of May, and a copy will be placed in the Library of the House.

### Public Bodies

**Dr. Wright:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage which of the advisory non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department are under a statutory requirement to *(a)* publish their advice to the Government, *(b)* publish an annual report and *(c)* lay an annual report before Parliament; and if he will list those bodies with a statutory base. [21159]

**Mr. Dorrell** *[holding answer 27 April 1995]:* The Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art publishes an annual report which includes any advice given by the committee to Government on matters connected with the export of cultural goods. Reports from the Advisory Council on Libraries may also include details of its advice to Government.

The Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and the Advisory Council on Libraries are the only advisory bodies for which my Department is responsible which are required to report annually and whose reports are laid in Parliament. The committee's report is presented as a Command Paper and the council's report forms part of the Secretary of State's annual report on the public library service, published as a House of Commons Paper. Reports from the Royal Fine Art Commission are also presented to Parliament as Command Papers, although there is no requirement for it to report annually.

On 4 April 1995, the Advisory Council on Libraries took over from the Library and Information Services Council (England) the statutory responsibilities established under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964. The Theatres Trust was established under the Theatres Trust Act 1976.

## HEALTH

### Departmental Annual Report

**Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what measures her Department takes to assess the cost and staff implications of compiling material for the departmental annual report; [20191]

(2) how much staff time, and at what estimated cost, was put into compiling the departmental annual report; and what were the figures for each year for which figures are available since 1990. [20190]

**Mr. Sackville:** The departmental report for the Department of Health has been produced by existing staff as part of their normal duties each year since its first publication in 1991. Production of the report is coordinated by approximately 0.6 whole-time equivalent staff, at a total cost of £14,100 at 1994–95 prices. It is not

possible to quantify the total input of those other staff across the Department who contribute material for the report.

### Appointments

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if undischarged bankrupts are eligible for appointment as chairmen, chief executives or directors of NHS authorities or trusts. [20688]

**Mr. Malone:** A person is disqualified for appointment as a chairman or member of a national health service authority or as a chairman or non-executive director of an NHS trust if he or she has within the preceding five years been adjudged bankrupt. The disqualification ceases on the date of discharge. Executive directors of NHS trusts and chief officers of health authorities are not subject to the same disqualification, but NHS boards are accountable for the proper appointment, appraisal and remuneration of senior executives. As in all their functions, the board must have regard to the public service values of accountability, probity and openness.

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if persons with criminal records are eligible for appointment as chief executives or directors to NHS trusts. [20699]

**Mr. Malone:** National health service trust boards are accountable for the proper appointment, appraisal and remuneration of their senior executives and, as in all their functions, boards must have regard to the public service values of accountability, probity and openness. Executive directors of NHS trusts are not subject to the conditions of disqualification set out in the NHS Trusts (Membership and Procedure) Regulations 1990, which preclude the appointment as chairmen and non-executive directors of anyone who has within the preceding five years been convicted in the United Kingdom of any offence resulting in a sentence of imprisonment of not less than three months.

### Local Pay Support Programme

**Mrs. Beckett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the cost of the NHS executive support programme for the introduction of local pay. [21776]

**Mr. Malone:** The programme referred to in my reply to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. Burden) on 20 February, *Official Report*, column 27, was undertaken at an estimated cost of £500,000 in the financial year 1994–95.

### Market Testing

**Mrs. Beckett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many private companies have contacted the NHS executive information desk about market testing of NHS services; and how many such companies are entered on the database in total and by (i) clinical and (ii) non-clinical category. [21757]

**Mr. Sackville:** The national health service executive's market-testing information desk was established in its present form on 7 April 1995. Since that time, three private companies have contacted the information desk. The market-testing database contains data on approximately 1,100 private companies which have successfully competed for one or more NHS service contracts. While the vast majority would have non-clinical contracts, information grouped into a clinical or non-clinical category could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

**Mrs. Beckett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the impact of market testing in the NHS on staff numbers; and what strategies she proposes to meet any changes. [21758]

**Mr. Sackville:** The market testing of national health service services has proved to be valuable in improving efficiency and value for money so that more can be made available for patient care. It can affect staffing numbers for any specified service in a wide variety of ways, but, whatever the outcome, the employment rights of staff are protected by both European Community and United Kingdom employment regulations and legislation. Handling the staffing issues that arise from market testing is a matter for local NHS management in accordance with their legal obligations and their assessment of local circumstances and needs.

### Single Antigen Acellular Pertussis

**Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many doses of the single antigen acellular pertussis vaccine have been given to children in this country since 1 May 1994; and what reports on the vaccine have been submitted to the Committee on Safety of Medicines. [21443]

**Mr. Sackville:** Information on how many children have received single antigen acellular pertussis vaccine during the period in question is not available. However, the number of doses of this vaccine issued to the national health service during the period was 9,827. The Committee on Safety of Medicines has since 1 May 1994 received a single suspected adverse reaction report in relation to the vaccine, a severe screaming attack.

### Weighted Capitation Formula

**Mrs. Beckett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the new weighted capitation formula and in what respects it differs from that proposed by the York report; and if she will make a statement on how much the formula is determined by the factor of deprivation. [21753]

**Mr. Sackville:** The modified weighted capitation formula adjusts populations for age, need—over and above age—and relative costs. This formula has been developed in the light of new information sources and advances in statistical techniques.

There is no index of deprivation in the formula. Instead, it uses two needs indices—one for acute services and the other for psychiatric services—which take account of health and socio-economic factors.

The York report did not propose a weighted capitation formula.

### Dental Services

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many dentists in each health district in Lancashire are employed by family health services authorities to carry out urgent dental treatment. [21668]

**Mr. Malone:** Information about the number of dentists working in the emergency dental service is not available centrally.

General dental practitioners, who are independent contractors, have an obligation under their terms of service to provide emergency cover for their registered patients. They may also offer emergency treatment to unregistered patients. Any unregistered patient who needs urgent treatment should seek the help of his or her family health services authority which can make arrangements for emergency treatment for them.

Two salaried dentists are employed by Lancashire family health services authority.

### Equal Opportunities

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) which Minister in her Department has responsibility for equal opportunities issues; [21450]

(2) what progress has been made within her Department on equal opportunities matters. [21451]

**Mr. Sackville:** I have responsibility for equal opportunities issues in the Department.

The information requested is contained in the Department's 1993–94 equal opportunities progress report, copies of which will be placed in the Library.

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish the gender assessment being prepared by the Department. [21452]

**Mr. Sackville:** Such assessment is part of a continuous and routine process of ensuring that the Department's policy proposals are not unlawful or unjustifiable on sex or race discrimination grounds and that similar principles apply to other groups.

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress she hopes to achieve in her Department over the next three months to push forward the declaration signed in October 1994 at the Vienna conference in preparation for the fourth UN conference on women; and if she will incorporate a section on equal opportunities in her Department's annual report. [21453]

**Mr. Sackville:** The Government are committed to the principles set out in the regional platform for action agreed at the preparatory conference in Vienna for the fourth United Nations world conference on women. We have taken these forward through a wide range of programmes and initiatives and will continue to do so.

A statement about equal opportunities is already included in the Department's annual report, copies of which are available in the Library.

### Private Finance Initiative

**Mrs. Beckett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what has been the expenditure on *(a)* establishment and running of the private finance unit, *(b)* private finance specialists in the regional offices, including the total number so far employed, *(c)* publishing and distributing the booklets "Public Service, Private Finance" and "Private Finance Guide" in the "Capital Investment Manual", and *(d)* engaging Newchurch and Company to set up a database and inquiry point in each of the last five years; what is the expenditure in the current year; and what is planned to be spent in each of the next two financial years; [21744]

(2) how many people are employed by each NHS executive office and health authority who are involved in the management and promotion of the private finance initiative; [21999]

(3) what is the total cost of promoting the private finance initiative for the NHS; [21998]

(4) what are the total man hours involved in the management and promotion of the private finance initiative by each NHS executive office and health authority. [22000]

**Mr. Simpson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what initiatives have been undertaken to secure private finance for her Department's projects. [22325]

**Mr. Sackville:** The private finance initiative will develop further the national health service's excellent record of co-operation with the private sector and ensure new hospitals are provided promptly and run efficiently for the benefit of all national health service patients. An increasing number of support services such as catering, cleaning and maintenance have been contracted out to private firms. This has cut waste and allowed large savings to be used for treating patients—as well as improving the services provided. The PFI increases the scope for savings on capital projects.

Expenditure on the establishment and running of the NHS executive private finance unit was about £55,000 in 1993–94 and about £260,000 in 1994–95—however, detailed expenditure figures are not available at this level. Expenditure in 1995–96 is expected to be about £146,000 plus about £300,000 for consultants who will provide added support for regional offices and the NHS. Expenditure in 1996–97 is likely to be around £150,000.

The number of staff employed by regional offices has not been increased because of the PFI. In 1994–95 private finance specialists in regional offices amounted to about one quarter of a whole-time equivalent post per region with expenditure of approximately £10,000 per region. In 1995–96 this is expected to increase to about one whole-time equivalent with expenditure of approximately £40,000 per region. This will be reviewed for 1996–97.

Expenditure on publishing the information pack "Public Service, Private Finance" was £7,896 plus £1,381.80 VAT. Expenditure by HMSO on publishing the "Private Finance Guide" as part of the "Capital Investment Manual" was £1,865. Itemised costs of distribution are not held centrally.

For information on expenditure on the PFI database run by Newchurch and Company, I refer the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) on 27 March, *Official Report*, column *421*. Expenditure agreed for the period April 1995 to September 1995 will be £9,000 plus £1,575 VAT. After this, the contract may be renegotiated and it is not possible to give further expenditure figures.

The NHS executive headquarters will employ five staff—four whole-time equivalent staff—in 1995–96 in the private finance unit. Each regional office has one contact point for the PFI, but there are no additional staff employed to manage and promote the PFI. In each regional office several staff are involved with ensuring that NHS capital projects are as cost-effective as possible and exploration of private finance is essential in seeking the most cost-effective solutions to NHS needs.

**Mr. Simpson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of her Department's budget is allocated

to initiatives which have been undertaken to secure private finance for her Department's projects. [22324]

**Mr. Sackville:** The answer is 0.16 per cent.

### Private Patients

**Mrs. Beckett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assumptions about the number of private patients being seen in NHS trust hospitals informed her estimate of charges and receipts in table 5 of the departmental report for 1994–95 and 1995–96. [21752]

**Mr. Sackville:** None.

### Hormone Replacement Therapy

**Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what studies her Department *(a)* has conducted and *(b)* intends to conduct into possible adverse side effects of hormone replacement therapy; and if she will make a statement. [21669]

**Mr. Sackville:** The Department does not conduct research itself, but has funded projects on hormone replacement therapy, most recently a project entitled HRT in the menopause: a cost-effective analysis, which ended in December 1994. The Health Departments are currently discussing further work with the Medical Research Council which receives its grant in aid from the Office of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

### Ethnic Minority Staff

**Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many jobs are on offer under the eight-point plan to increase the number of managers in the NHS from the ethnic minorities; and what has been the take-up and distribution of the opportunities under the programme. [21495]

**Mr. Malone:** The programme referred to, "Ethnic minority staff in the NHS: a programme of action", aims to ensure that the national health service makes full use of the abilities of all its staff. It provides a framework within which trusts and health authorities set employment equality objectives as part of their mainstream business planning. Selection remains on merit alone: there are no quotas or jobs "on offer". A copy of the programme is available in the Library.

### General Practitioners

**Ms Jowell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many GPs were available per 1,000 population in London, Newcastle, Manchester, Birmingham and Liverpool in each year since 1991. [21915]

**Mr. Malone:** The numbers of general practitioners—unrestricted principles—per 1,000 of the population for the areas in question at 1 October 1991, 1992, 1993 and 1 April 1994 are as shown in the table.

| | *October 1991* | *October 1992* | *October 1993* | *April 1994* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Inner London | 0.57 | 0.58 | 0.58 | 0.58 |
| Outer London | 0.54 | 0.54 | 0.54 | 0.54 |
| Newcastle | 0.58 | 0.61 | 0.59 | 0.61 |
| Manchester | 0.58 | 0.60 | 0.62 | 0.62 |
| Birmingham | 0.56 | 0.56 | 0.55 | 0.56 |
| Liverpool | 0.51 | 0.50 | 0.52 | 0.55 |

*Notes:*

1. Family health services authorities included in inner London are:
   i. Brent and Harrow,
   ii. Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster,
   iii. Camden and Islington,
   iv. City and East London,
   v. Enfield and Haringey,
   vi. Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham, and
   vii. Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth.
2. Family health services authorities included in outer London are:
   i. Barnet,
   ii. Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow,
   iii. Hillingdon,
   iv. Redbridge and Waltham Forest,
   v. Greenwich and Bexley,
   vi. Bromley, and
   vii. Kingston and Richmond.
3. Newcastle, Manchester, Birmingham and Liverpool each have their own FHSAs.
4. Calculations based on Office of Population Censuses and Surveys resident population estimates from 1991 population census and projections for subsequent years.

### Guy's Accident and Emergency Department

**Ms Jowell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received from the City of London police about the closure of Guy's accident and emergency department; and if she will make a statement. [21923]

**Mr. Malone:** None.

### Mental Health Staff

**Ms Jowell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much has been spent on training mental health staff to deal with supervision registers for the mentally ill. [21922]

**Mr. Bowis:** Training on supervision registers is primarily a matter for national health service provider units and information on spending is not available

centrally. Staff who receive training in the care programme approach will now be informed about supervision registers. We have provided financial support for a number of national conferences designed to improve training in the care programme approach and have made a grant of £50,000 to the Open university for the production of a training pack for social services staff.

### Nurses

**Mr. Spellar:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what tests are applied to nursing staff from EU countries working in the United Kingdom; and what tests are applied to British trained nurses working in other EU countries. [22008]

**Mr. Sackville:** Council directive 77/452/EEC requires countries of the European Economic Area to recognise, on the terms it specifies, which may include proof of good character, the qualifications of nurses responsible for general care awarded by other EEA countries to EEA nationals. European Council directive 77/453/EEC requires EEA countries to guarantee that such qualifications meet the minimum training requirements that it specifies. The operation of the directives is a matter for the competent authorities of the EEA countries. The competent authority in the United Kingdom is the United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting.

### Residential Care

**Mr. Alan Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health which local authorities are using their discretion to allow a spouse to receive part of the occupational pension of a married person in local authority provided residential and nursing home care. [22277]

**Mr. Bowis:** This information is not collected. We have not received reports of any individual local authorities which are refusing to make sensible use of the discretion they have to help the spouses of occupational pensioners who enter residential accommodation.

### Civil Servants

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the individual value of each *(a)* compulsory early retirement and *(b)* flexible early retirement package received by civil servants leaving her Department on grounds of limited efficiency in each of the last five years. [22085]

**Mr. Sackville:** The information on reasons for awarding different types of early retirement is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

### Patients Charter

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) on how many occasions each family health services authority failed to provide a list of doctors within two working days to patients wishing to change general practitioners in each of the last eight quarters; [22095]

(2) on how many occasions each family health services authority failed to send a patient's medical records to his or her new general practitioner *(a)* within two working days for urgent cases and *(b)* within six weeks for all other cases in each of the last eight quarters. [22094]

**Mr. Malone:** Nationally, there has been a considerable improvement in meeting the patients charter standard for transfer of urgent and routine medical records. The percentage of patient records not transferred within two working days has fallen from 52 per cent. at 30 June 1993 to 16 per cent. at 31 December 1994. Those not transferred within six weeks has fallen from 34 per cent. to 19 per cent. for the same period.

At 30 June 1993, 2 per cent. of patients were not allocated to a general practitioner within two days and at 31 December 1994 the patients charter was fully met for the third successive quarter.

The information will be placed in the Library showing the performance of individual family health services authorities in meeting each of the patients charter standards for the period 1 April 1993 to 31 December 1994. Data to 31 March 1995 are not yet available.

### "Environments for Quality Care"

**Mrs. Beckett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total cost for the production and distribution of the NHS executive booklet "Environments for Quality Care: Health Buildings in the Community" first published in 1994. [22003]

**Mr. Sackville:** The cost for production of the national health service executive booklet "Environments for Quality Care: Health Buildings in the Community" was £60,000. The cost of distribution cannot be quantified. Copies were mainly sent in bulk to family health services authorities which in turn forwarded the booklet to all general practitioner practices in England.

### Young Alzheimer's Disease

**Mrs. Jane Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people were suffering from *(a)* young Alzheimer's disease and *(b)* severe brain injury (i) nationally and (ii) in Merseyside, broken down by health authority area for each of the last five years. [22334]

**Mr. Bowis:** It is estimated that 17,000 younger people below the age of 65 suffer from dementia in the United Kingdom. No figures are available for severe brain injury as it is not a recognised medical term.

### Medical (Professional Performance) Bill

**Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she has received the draft regulations that the General Medical Council expects to implement consequent to the coming into force of the Medical (Professional Performance) Bill; and if she will place them in the Library. [22212]

**Mr. Malone:** No. The rules cannot be made until the Bill has been enacted. The rules will be made in the form of statutory instruments, subject to the negative resolution procedure.

**Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to the oral statements of the Minister for Health in the Special Standing Committee on 25 April, *Official Report*, columns 748-49; if she will list the names of professional and patient organisations consulted in relation to the Medical (Professional Performance) Bill and place copies of their responses in the Library. [22214]

**Mr. Malone:** The names of the professional and patient organisations which were consulted by the General Medical Council are already in the public domain. They were listed in appendix A of the General Medical Council's consultation paper "Proposals for new Performance Procedures", published in May 1992. Copies of the document are available in the Library.

Availability of the responses are a matter for the General Medical Council or the individual organisations to decide on.

### Fostering Regulations

**Ms Coffey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will place in the Library copies of the responses to her consultations with organisations on the proposed changes to fostering regulations; and when she expects these consultations to be complete. [22219]

**Mr. Bowis:** Responses are due by 19 May and I shall consider placing a summary of them in the Library after this date.

### NHS External Expenditure

**Mrs. Beckett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the amount of money in real terms spent by each health authority, outside the NHS in *(a)* 1991–92, *(b)* 1992–93, *(c)* 1993–94 and the same figures for each trust. [19809]

**Mr. Malone** *[holding answer 21 April 1995]:* Spending outside the national health service has been defined for the purpose of this parliamentary question as non-pay revenue expenditure plus agency staff costs. Non-pay expenditure includes such items as clinical and general supplies and services, establishment expenses, transport and moveable plant, premises and fixed plant, capital, purchase of health care from the non-NHS bodies, external contract staffing and consultancy services and miscellaneous expenses, for example, net bank charges.

This information will be placed in the Library.

## SCOTLAND

### Tourist Board (Membership)

**Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the nominees for the Argyll and the Islands, Loch Lomond, Stirling and Trossachs tourist board; and if he will make a statement on when elections will take place for this body, whether an individual has to reside in the area covered by the board and if an individual can be a member of more than one board simultaneously. [20520]

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** My right hon. Friend will appoint the first members of the controlling body of the board on the basis of nominations from the existing area tourist boards and from local authorities. Nominations will be sought shortly. Thereafter the controlling body will be appointed by the new board itself from within its own membership.

We are at present consulting on the terms of the statutory scheme which will establish the new board. It is likely, however, that the requirements for membership will follow current practice whereby residence within the area covered by a board is not essential and whereby bodies or individuals may also be members of more than one board.

### Geese, Islay

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the number of *(a)* barnacle and *(b)* Greenland white-fronted geese killed under licence on Islay to prevent agricultural damage in each winter since 1985–86; and how many returns in respect of each of the licences issued were incomplete. [21180]

**Sir Hector Monro:** The information is as follows:

| *Year* | *Barnacles reported shot* | *White-fronts reported shot* |
|---|---|---|
| 1985–86 | 541 | 0 |
| 1986–87 | 791 | 0 |
| 1987–88 | 505 | 76 |
| 1988–89 | 752 | 6 |
| 1989–90 | 915 | 45 |
| 1990–91 | 1365 | 62 |
| 1991–92 | 914 | 37 |
| 1992–93 | 0 | 0 |
| 1993–94 | 13 | 8 |

Returns, including supplementary information provided at the request of the Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department, are generally satisfactory.

### Out-patient Waiting Times

**Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the average waiting time for an ear, nose and throat appointment in *(a)* Inverclyde, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Scotland in each of the last five years. [21089]

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** The requested information for 1993 and 1994 is shown in the table below. Corresponding information for earlier years is not available centrally.

*New Out-patient Referrals Average waiting times (days) for ENT clinics in Inverclyde, Strathclyde and Scotland*

| | *1993* | | *1994* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Mean* | *Median* | *Mean* | *Median* |
| Inverclyde | 45 | 37 | 48 | 44 |
| Strathclyde[1] | 63 | 51 | 56 | 45 |
| Scotland | 58 | 49 | 54 | 46 |

[1] Clinics held within Greater Glasgow, Argyll and Clyde, Ayrshire and Arran and Lanarkshire health board areas.

**Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the average waiting time for a hearing aid clinic in *(a)* Inverclyde, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Scotland in each of the last five years. [21090]

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** The information requested is not available centrally.

### Class Sizes

**Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the cost of adopting a policy which ensures that no class size in schools exceeds 30 pupils in number. [21091]

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Current class size limits are incorporated in the scheme of salaries and conditions of service determined by the Scottish Joint Negotiating Committee for Teaching Staff in School Education. As these matters are therefore primarily for local authorities to determine, my right hon. Friend has made no estimate of the cost of variation in existing class size limits.

**Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the number and percentage of pupils in secondary schools in *(a)* January 1980, *(b)* January 1991, *(c)* January 1992, *(d)* January 1993, *(e)* January 1994 and *(f)* January 1995 being taught in classes of (i) under 30 and (ii) 40 or more in each local education authority. [21845]

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** The available information is given in the tables. This is derived from returns made by education authority secondary schools in the September 1979, September 1991 and September 1993 school censuses. From 1983, information on class size was collected biennially in the school census.

*Pupils in subject classes of under 30 at September*

| *Education Authority* | *Number* | | | *Per cent.* | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | [1]*1979* | [2]*1991* | [2]*1993* | [1]*1979* | [2]*1991* | [2]*1993* |
| *Scotland* | *327,328* | *3,176,473* | *3,360,688* | *83.4* | *95.6* | *94.6* |
| Borders | 5,849 | 66,505 | 73,002 | 85.5 | 99.6 | 99.3 |
| Central | 17,611 | 187,216 | 201,246 | 82.4 | 92.7 | 97.2 |
| Dumfries and Galloway | 9,008 | 103,674 | 110,950 | 81.0 | 98.3 | 99.3 |
| Fife | 20,395 | 223,259 | 240,205 | 81.9 | 97.5 | 95.9 |
| Grampian | 29,684 | 335,079 | 341,418 | 89.3 | 95.4 | 95.8 |
| Highland | 13,037 | 154,612 | 171,172 | 85.8 | 97.1 | 95.7 |
| Lothian | 43,657 | 394,441 | 412,359 | 87.9 | 97.5 | 94.9 |
| Strathclyde | 159,342 | 1,415,974 | 1,504,629 | 81.5 | 94.1 | 92.6 |
| Tayside | 24,139 | 237,774 | 245,017 | 83.9 | 97.9 | 96.9 |
| Orkney | 1,286 | 15,172 | 15,501 | 89.1 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| Shetland | 1,416 | 17,685 | 19,316 | 92.0 | 99.5 | 99.8 |
| Western Isles | 1,904 | 25,082 | 25,873 | 82.8 | 99.6 | 100.0 |
| *Strathclyde Divisions:* | | | | | | |
| Argyll and Bute | 4,331 | 43,852 | 45,838 | 90.9 | 94.6 | 98.3 |
| Ayr | 23,457 | 246,170 | 268,932 | 77.6 | 97.0 | 96.4 |
| Dunbarton | 22,875 | 233,262 | 240,707 | 85.3 | 95.7 | 92.7 |
| Glasgow | 48,645 | 324,023 | 348,905 | 82.2 | 93.3 | 92.8 |
| Lanark | 36,877 | 336,679 | 367,221 | 80.1 | 92.8 | 92.2 |
| Renfrew | 23,157 | 231,988 | 233,026 | 79.2 | 92.3 | 87.9 |

[1] Subject classes at a single timetable period in census week.
[2] All subject classes running at census week; pupils are counted once for each subject taken.
The figures for 1993 exclude two schools for which information is not available.

*Pupils in subject classes of 40 or over at September*

| *Education Authority* | *Number* | | | *Per cent.* | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | [1]*1979* | [2]*1991* | [2]*1993* | [1]*1979* | [2]*1991* | [2]*1993* |
| *Scotland* | *1,032* | *369* | *6,209* | *0.3* | *0.0* | *0.2* |
| Borders | 0 | 0 | 185 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.3 |
| Central | 0 | 119 | 0 | 0.0 | 0.1 | 0.0 |
| Dumfries and Galloway | 0 | 0 | 40 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Fife | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Grampian | 53 | 0 | 1,634 | 0.2 | 0.0 | 0.9 |
| Highland | 220 | 0 | 94 | 1.4 | 0.0 | 0.1 |
| Lothian | 99 | 0 | 657 | 0.2 | 0.0 | 0.2 |
| Strathclyde | 95 | 250 | 2,907 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.2 |
| Tayside | 481 | 0 | 692 | 1.7 | 0.0 | 0.3 |
| Orkney | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Shetland | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Western Isles | 44 | 0 | 0 | 1.9 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| *Strathclyde Divisions:* | | | | | | |
| Argyll and Bute | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Ayr | 40 | 0 | 1,737 | 0.1 | 0.0 | 0.6 |
| Dunbarton | 0 | 0 | 136 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.1 |
| Glasgow | 0 | 46 | 157 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Lanark | 55 | 0 | 0 | 0.1 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
| Renfrew | 0 | 204 | 877 | 0.0 | 0.1 | 0.3 |

[1] Virtually all classes of 40 or more involve some form of team teaching.
[2] Subject classes at a single timetable period in census week.
*Note:*
All subject classes running at census week; pupils are counted once for each subject taken.
The figures for 1993 exclude two schools for which information is not available.

### Cervical Smear Programme, Greenock

**Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if all of the recommendations contained in the report of the committee of inquiry into the maladministration of the cervical smear programme at the Inverclyde Royal hospital, Greenock, have been implemented; and if he will make a statement. [21615]

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** The report of the inquiry into Cytopathology at Inverclyde Royal hospital recommended action by Argyll and Clyde health board local management and the Scottish Office Home and Health Department.

I am advised that all of the recommendations which applied to local management have been implemented by Argyll and Clyde health board.

The Common Services Agency, which has responsibility for the national breast screening co-ordinating unit, was instructed to develop and maintain quality assurance, performance monitoring and evaluation of the cervical screening programme. The unit continues to develop appropriate standards. A key appointment in this new structure is a national co-ordinator for both breast and cervical screening programmes. On the first advertisement, no suitable candidate was found and an interim co-ordinator was appointed. The permanent post will be re-advertised shortly.

A working group to formulate the policy for implementation of internal quality control in all laboratories carrying out cervical cytopathology was set up in February 1994 under the chairmanship of one of the Department's medical officers, and comprises members from the Royal College of Pathologists, the British Society of Clinical Cytology, the Institute of Biomedical Science and representatives from each of the three other UK Departments of Health. The working group has now submitted its report to the four territorial chief medical officers.

Other recommendations which have been implemented or are in the course of implementation are as follows:

In March 1994, a promotional leaflet encouraging women to attend for screening was distributed to all GPs and clinics.

In August 1994, booklets and videos on the current best practice in taking cervical smears produced by the British Society for Clinical Cytology were distributed to all GPs, practice nurses and other health professionals.

In March 1995, guidelines on failsafe actions for the follow-up of women with abnormal cervical smear histories were distributed to health boards, NHS trusts, GPs, practice nurses and laboratories providing a cervical cytology service.

By June 1995, revised guidance should be issued to health boards on purchasing, management and organisation of the cervical cytology service including staffing and appropriate levels of training.

I am copying this answer to the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham) for information.

### Residential Homes for Elderly Citizens

**Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the terms of reference given to his working party which is reviewing the ownership, management and monitoring of privately owned residential homes for elderly citizens; and if he will list the members of the aforesaid committee. [21844]

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Following is the remit of the Scottish Office working group on residential care home registration procedures:

*Purpose*

(a) To review, in the light of recent incidents, current registration and inspection procedures and local authority powers under the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968, as amended by the Registered Establishments (Scotland) Act 1987.

(b) To review current Scottish Office guidance and practice guidance on these issues.

(c) To have regard to the financial and operational implications of regulatory control for independent sector providers.

(d) To have regard to the parallel exercise relating to the registration and inspection of nursing homes.

(e) To recommend to Ministers such changes as may be necessary concerning (a) to (c).

*Objective*

To provide local authorities with the necessary framework to achieve effective and equitable regulation of independent sector establishments in order to protect the welfare and interests of residents.

The members of the working group represent the main interest groups as follows:

*The Scottish Office*

Mr. G. Anderson (Chair)

Ms P. McCaw

Mr. H. MacKenzie

Mr. A. McNaughton

Mrs. J. McNeill

*Convention of Scottish Local Authorities*

Mr. A. Robb, Director, Grampian Regional Council Social Work Department

*Association of Directors of Social Work*

Miss M. Hartnoll, Director, Strathclyde Regional Council Social Work Department (alternative Mr. R. Winter, Deputy Director)

*Social Work Department Registration and Inspection Units*

Mr. I Middleton, Head of Unit, Lothian Regional Council Social Work Department

*Local Authority Law and Administration*

Mr. R. Marr, Assistant Chief Executive, Borders Regional Council

*British Federation of Care Home Proprietors*

Mr. H. Ross

*Scottish Association of Care Home Owners*

Mr. C. Cowie

*Scottish Federation of Housing Associations*

Mr. D. Bookbinder

*Voluntary Sector*

Mr. I. Baillie, Director of Social Work, Church of Scotland

*Users Advocacy*

Mr. J. Jackson, Executive Director, Alzheimer Scotland—Action on Dementia

### Ravenscraig Hospital, Greenock

**Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent discussions he has engaged in about the proposed closure of the Ravenscraig hospital, Greenock; and if he will make a statement. [21846]

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Argyll and Clyde health board is considering the role of Ravenscraig hospital as part of the review of community care services for the area. It would not be appropriate to anticipate the board's final view, or the outcome of any future consultation exercise.

## Endangered Species

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the population of *(a)* pine martens, *(b)* peregrine falcons, *(c)* hen-harriers and *(d)* sparrowhawks in each year since 1980; and what is his estimate of the amount of damage each species does to game birds. [21848]

**Sir Hector Monro:** There are no annual population estimates for any of these species in Scotland. The most recent population estimates are as follows:

| | *Number* |
|---|---|
| Pine Marten | 3,500 (1993) |
| Peregrine Falcon | 639 pairs (1991) |
| Hen Harrier | 570 pairs (1989) |
| Sparrowhawk | No estimate |

Estimates of the effect of these species on game bird populations are not available, but damage certainly takes place.

## NHS Trust Boards

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish an up-to-date list of all the chairs and non-executive directors of each NHS trust board, indicating the gender and occupation of each individual. [21356]

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton** *[holding answer 1 May 1995]:* As the information requested is lengthy, I shall arrange for it to be placed in the House Library.

## Health Boards

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish an up-to-date list by region of all the chairs and non-executive members of each health board, indicating the gender and occupation of each individual. [21359]

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton** *[holding answer 1 May 1995]:* The information requested in respect of the 15 health boards in Scotland is as follows:

| | *Ocupation* |
|---|---|
| Argyll and Clyde Health Board | |
| *Chairman:* | |
| Mr. Malcolm Jones | Company director |
| *Non-Executive Members:* | |
| Mrs. Elizabeth Lander | Company director |
| Mr. John Mullin | Voluntary sector administrator/regional councillor |
| Miss Moira Leitch | Retired medical social worker |
| Mr. Robert Anderson | Retired banker |
| Mr. Ian Macdonald | Air traffic controller |
| Mrs. Sheenah Nelson | Primary school teacher |
| Ayrshire and Arran Health Board | |
| *Chairman:* | |
| Mr. James Donaldson | Electrical engineer |
| *Non-Executive Members:* | |
| Mr. Gerald Curran | Company director |
| Dr. Kenneth Fegan | General medical practitioner |
| Mr. John Greene | Solicitor |
| Miss Katherine Paterson | Retired nursing officer |
| Mrs. Elizabeth Reid | Health carer |
| Mr. William Young | Company director |
| Borders Health Board | |
| *Chairman:* | |
| Mr. David Kilshaw | Solicitor |
| *Non-Executive Members:* | |
| Miss Margaret Marshall | Chartered secretary |
| Mr. Derek Deans | Chartered accountant |
| Rev. Alistair Bennett | Minister of religion |
| Dr. Alistair Paton | Retired general medical practitioner |
| Lady Sanderson | Business consultant |
| Mr. Hamish Steven | NFU secretary |
| Dumfries and Galloway Health Board | |
| *Chairman:* | |
| Mrs. Jean Tulloch | Partner in farming business |
| *Non-Executive Members:* | |
| Dr. Robert Mack | General medical practitioner |
| Mr. Frank Manson | Chartered accountant |
| Mr. Hugh McFadzean | Farmer |
| Mrs. Victoria Jardine-Paterson | Housewife |
| Dr. John Stubbs | Retired anaesthetist |
| Mrs. Margery Thomson | Housewife |
| Fife Health Board | |
| *Chairman:* | |
| Mr. Raymond Baker | Director, GEC Scotland Ltd. |
| *Non-Executive Members:* | |
| Dr. Alan Alexander | General medical practitioner |
| Miss Joyce Smith | Regional councillor |
| Mr. Gordon Thomson | Assistant Director, ICAS |
| Mrs. Avril Campbell | Company director |
| Mrs. Mary Dunsmore | Company director |
| Mrs. Martha Steedman | Retired headmistress |
| Forth Valley Health Board | |
| *Chairman:* | |
| Mrs. Jane Isbister | Former school teacher |
| *Non-Executive Members:* | |
| Mr. Ewan Bell-Scott | Solicitor |
| Rev. Jean Gallagher | Minister of religion |
| Mrs. Kristeen Smith | Vice-chairman Scotland and emergency services organiser, WRVS |
| Mr. Keith Harding | Retailer/district councillor |
| Mr. Peter Joynson | Chartered surveyor |
| Mr. Colin Stroyan | Solicitor |
| Grampian Health Board | |
| *Chairman:* | |
| Dr. Calum MacLeod | Company chairman |
| *Non-Executive Members:* | |
| Mrs. Carroll Ferguson | Housewife/farmer |
| Dr. Jean Stringer | University dean |
| Professor Derek Ogston | Professor of clinical medicine |
| Mr. Keith Arbuthnott | Estate owner/manager |
| Mr. Gordon McLellan | Senior executive |
| Mrs. Elizabeth Park | Assistant solicitor |
| Greater Glasgow Health Board | |
| *Chairman:* | |
| Sir Robert Calderwood | Retired local authority chief executive |
| *Non-Executive Members:* | |
| Professor Gordon Dickson | University dean |
| Mr. William McCreath | Solicitor |
| Mr. Andrew Scobbie | Retired managing director |
| Dr. Fiona Marshall | General medical practitioner |
| Rev. Roderick Campbell | Minister of religion |
| Mrs. Joan MacKenzie | Housewife |
| Professor Brian Whiting | Professor of clinical pharmacology |

| | Ocupation |
|---|---|
| Highland Health Board | |
| *Chairman:* | |
| Mr. John Robertson | Company director |
| *Non-Executive Members:* | |
| Mr. John Ligertwood | Retired bank manager |
| Mrs. Angela Macpherson | Housewife/farm partner |
| Mrs. Caroline Thomson | Housewife/company director |
| Mrs. Lorraine Mann | Principal, research analyst |
| Mr. Colin Neilson | Retailer |
| Dr. John MacDonald | Retired general medical practitioner |
| Lanarkshire Health Board | |
| *Chairman:* | |
| Mr. Ian Livingstone | Solicitor |
| *Non-Executive Members:* | |
| Dr. Angus Cameron | General medical practitioner |
| Mrs. Linda McDowall | Chief executive, East Kilbride business centre |
| Mr. James Robertson | Former regional councillor |
| Mrs. Magdalene Melvin | Teacher |
| Mr. John Martindale | Retired police officer |
| Mr. John Thomson | Voluntary sector director |
| Lothian Health Board | |
| *Chairman:* | |
| Dr. John Baynham | Company director |
| *Non-Executive Members:* | |
| Mr. John Campbell | Chartered surveyor |
| Mr. Richard Findlay | Deputy chairman and chief executive of Radio Forth Group |
| Mrs. Vanessa Gaskell | Former GP practice manager |
| Mrs. Gertrude Barton | Former nurse |
| Professor David Carter | Regius professor of surgery |
| Mrs. Lorna Smith | Solicitor |
| Orkney Health Board | |
| *Chairman* | |
| Mr. Eoin Leslie | Retired pharmacist |
| *Non-Executive Members:* | |
| Mrs Phyllis Brown | Training administrator |
| Mrs. Edgar Gibson | Retired assistant head teacher |
| Captain Marcus Gunn | Ships master |
| Mrs. Elizabeth Kerr | Housewife |
| Mr. Jim Rendall | Sub-postmaster/postman |
| Dr. James Walker | General medical practitioner |
| Shetland Health Board | |
| *Chairman:* | |
| Mrs. Florence Grains | Housewife/islands councillor |
| *Non-Executive Members:* | |
| Mrs. Mary Colligan | Retired teacher |
| Mr. Brian Gregson | Retired RAF squadron leader |
| Dr. Michael Hunter | General medical practitioner |
| Mr. Robert Johnson | Retired business man |
| Mrs. Thelma Leslie | Teaching auxiliary |
| Mr. John Telford | Chartered accountant |
| Tayside Health Board | |
| *Chairman:* | |
| Mr. James Macfarlane | Company director |
| *Non-Executive Members:* | |
| Mr. Malcolm May | Chief officer, council for voluntary services |
| Mrs. Vera Joiner | Managing director |
| Mr. Harry Nicoll | Retired local authority director of finance |
| Professor Richard Olver | Professor of child health |
| Mr. Ian Sandison | Retired company director |
| Vacancy | |
| Western Isles Health Board | |
| *Chairman:* | |
| Mr. Andrew Matheson | Pharmacist |
| *Non-Executive Members:* | |
| Mr. Jeffrey Sedgley | Head teacher |
| Mr. John Harrison | Deputy head teacher |
| Mrs. Christina MacAskill | Housewife/seasonal tourist officer |
| Mrs. Fiona MacDonald | Solicitor |
| Mr. Murdo MacLennan | Building society manager |
| Dr. Marten Walker | General medical practitioner |

### European Social Fund

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list those projects in privatised companies which have received European social fund support since privatisation indicating *(a)* the level of funding and *(b)* the dates when it was received. [21297]

**Mr. Kynoch** *[holding answer 1 May 1995]:* My right hon. Friend took over responsibility for ESF under objectives 1, 2 and 5b in Scotland from 1 January 1994. No European social fund support has been given to projects in privatised companies since then.

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list those public projects which received European social fund support and were subsequently privatised over the last 10 years, indicating *(a)* the level of funding and *(b)* the dates when it was received. [21296]

**Mr. Kynoch** *[holding answer 1 May 1995]:* Since my right hon. Friend took responsibility for ESF in Scotland from 1 January 1994, no European social fund support has been given to public projects which were subsequently privatised.

### Conflicts of Interest

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on how many occasions during the last five years *(a)* civil servants and *(b)* special advisers in his Department or its agencies have declared conflicts of interest; and how many instructions have been issued about their retention, disposal or management. [21396]

**Mr. Lang** *[holding answer 1 may 1995]:* In my Department and agencies for which I am responsible, any conflict of interest involving a civil servant would have been dealt with in accordance with established guidance. Records of the numbers of cases are not held centrally.

In the last five years, however, no special advisers have declared a conflict of interest.

### Market Testing

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the cost of employing consultants in connection with market-testing programmes in which his Department has been engaged since their inception. [21375]

**Mr. Lang** *[holding answer 1 May 1995]:* Between 1 April 1992 and 31 March 1995, the cost of employing external consultants to give support to the "Competing for Quality" programme of the Scottish Office has been £1.4 million.

This total includes the cost of assisting clients in the development of outline specifications, developing general guidance, supporting the preparation of bids by some in-house teams and ensuring that skills were transferred to Scottish Office staff so that future programmes could largely be supported by in-house staff.

### NHS Provider Units

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the total annual cost improvement programme in the national health service provider units in each of the last four years. [21331]

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton** *[holding answer 1 May 1995]:* The information requested is not collected centrally.

### Public Bodies

**Dr. Wright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which of the executive non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department publish *(a)* annual reports, *(b)* annual accounts, *(c)* minutes of meetings, *(d)* the agendas of meetings and *(e)* registers of members' interests; and whether this in each case is (i) under statutory requirement or (ii) voluntary. [20503]

**Mr. Lang** *[holding answer 25 April 1995]:* The information which is requested is as follows:

(a) Those executive NDPBs which are covered by the Companies Acts are required to publish annual reports and some other bodies are also required by the statute creating them to publish annual reports. These bodies are:

Hannah Research Institute
Macaulay Land Use Research Institute
Moredun Research Institute
Rowett Research Institute
Scottish Crop Research Institute
River Purification Boards
Scottish Conveyancing and Executry Services Board
Scottish Council for Educational Technology
Scottish Hospital Endowments Research Trust
Scottish Seed Potato Development Council
Scottish Vocational Educational Council.

In a number of other cases, the body is required by statute to produce an annual report on the exercise and performance of its functions for the Secretary of State which he is obliged to lay before Parliament. These bodies are:

Crofters Commission
Highlands and Islands Enterprise
National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting for Scotland
National Museums of Scotland (required by statute at least every three years, but voluntarily produces an annual report)
National Galleries of Scotland (required by statute every 3 years, but voluntarily produces an annual report)
New Town Development Corporations
Red Deer Commission
Royal Botanic Garden
Scottish Agricultural Wages Board (as part of the Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department Annual Report which is a Command Paper)
Scottish Enterprise
Scottish Examination Board
Scottish Homes
Scottish Legal Aid Board
Scottish Natural Heritage
Scottish Tourist Board

Some bodies publish reports on a non-statutory basis. They are:

Accounts Commission for Scotland
Edinburgh New Town Conservation Committee
National Library of Scotland
Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland
Scottish Arts Council
Scottish Community Education Council
Scottish Film Council
Scottish Further Education Unit
Scottish Higher Education Funding Council
Scottish Medical Practices Committee
Scottish Sports Council

(b) Those bodies which are required to publish their annual accounts under the terms of the Companies Acts, the Friendly Societies Acts or other legislation are:

Hannah Research Institute
Macaulay Land Research Institute
Moredun Research Institute
Rowett Research Institute
Scottish Crop Research Institute
River Purification Boards
Scottish Council for Educational Technology
Scottish Hospital Endowments Research Trust
Scottish Seed Potato Development Council
Scottish Vocational Educational Council.

Some bodies are required by statute to submit annual accounts to the Secretary of State who is obliged to pass them to the Comptroller and Auditor General. He is then obliged to lay copies of them before Parliament. These bodies are:

Accounts Commission Scotland
Highlands and Islands Enterprise
National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting for Scotland
National Library of Scotland
National Galleries of Scotland
National Museums of Scotland
New Town Development Corporations
Royal Botanic Garden
Scottish Enterprise
Scottish Examination Board
Scottish Higher Education Funding Council
Scottish Homes
Scottish Legal Aid Board
Scottish Natural Heritage
Scottish Tourist Board.

The Scottish Sports Council makes its accounts available on a voluntary basis.

(c) No executive NDPB sponsored by my Department is required to publish the minutes of its meetings on a statutory basis. The minutes of the General Teaching Council for Scotland are published on a voluntary basis; Livingston development corporation voluntarily makes available for public inspection the minutes of those parts of its meetings which it opens to members of the public.

(d) No executive NDPB sponsored by my Department is required to publish the agenda of its meetings and none does so.

(e) Information about members' interests is available from Companies House in relation to executive NDPBs which are covered by the Companies Acts and the Friendly Societies Acts. These bodies are:

Hannah Research Institute
Macaulay Land Use Research Institute
Moredum Research Institute
Rowett Research Institute
Scottish Crop Research Institute
Scottish Council for Educational Technology
Scottish Vocational Education Council

Although registers of members' interests are held by a number of other executive NPDBs, none is required to publish them. Following the publication last year of the code of best practice for board members of public bodies, the Scottish version of which was published in September 1994 and a copy of which is available in the Library of the House, a number of executive NDPBs are considering publication of their register of members' interests on an annual basis, although none has yet done so.

## DEFENCE

### Bosnia

6. **Sir Fergus Montgomery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next expects to visit Bosnia to inspect the work of the UN peacekeeping force. [20081]

**Mr. Rifkind:** I hope to be able to visit British forces in Bosnia before the summer recess.

23. **Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to increase the allocation of aircraft fuel to the RAF detachments enforcing the UN no-fly zone over Bosnia. [20098]

**Mr. Freeman:** The RAF detachments helping to enforce the UN no-fly zone over Bosnia draw fuel as required to meet their operational commitments. This arrangement works well and there are no plans to change it.

### Royal Anglian Regiment

15. **Mr. Garnier:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next intends to pay an official visit to units of the Royal Anglian Regiment to discuss its future deployment. [20090]

**Mr. Freeman:** I look forward to paying an early visit to my local regiment, the Royal Anglians.

### Defence Industries

16. **Mr. Waterson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what estimate he has made of the number of people employed in United Kingdom defence industries. [20091]

**Mr. Freeman:** I refer my hon. Friend to section 1.10 of "UK Defence Statistics", 1994 edition, which gives details of defence-related employment, published by the Government statistical service. The 1995 edition of this document will be published in July.

### Royal Irish Regiment

17. **Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many soldiers in the Royal Irish Regiment have appealed against their discharge from the regiment in the last two years. [20092]

**Mr. Freeman:** Seven soldiers of the Royal Irish Regiment have appealed against discharge from the regiment in the last two years.

### Service Personnel (Disablement)

19. **Mr. Pickthall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many people were disabled as a result of injury in the armed forces in the last three years for which he has records. [20094]

**Mr. Freeman:** Although statistics for the number of service personnel disabled as a result of injury in the armed services are not held, the numbers of personnel discharged on medical grounds are as follows:

1991–92: 842
1992–93: 772
1993–94: 809

### Defence Attachés

20. **Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent consultations he has had to reform the system of appointment of defence attachés. [20095]

**Mr. Freeman:** The most recent review of attachés was the Goddard study, which considered the tasks of the corps, its long-term role and deployment, and its management and operation and reported in July 1993.

### Departmental Land

21. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much land is currently owned or leased by his Department. [20096]

**Mr. Freeman:** My Department owns some 242,000 hectares of land including foreshore, of which 226,700 hectares are freehold and 15,300 hectares are leasehold. These figures are at 1 April last year, the latest date for which records are available, and relate to freehold and leasehold landholdings, including foreshore, for which deeds or lease agreements were held. Acquisitions or disposals which may have been completed but where deeds had not been transferred, or agreements not formally signed or determined by that date, are not included in these figures.

### Helicopters

22. **Mr. Spellar:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to make an announcement on new helicopter orders for the armed forces. [20097]

**Mr. Freeman:** My Department is evaluating tenders to meet the Army's requirement for an attack helicopter. We hope to announce a decision on the purchase of that equipment before the summer recess. We do not expect to make any other announcements on new major helicopter orders in the near future.

28. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to visit the Eurocopter Helicopter Group in the near future to discuss procurement policy. [20103]

**Mr. Freeman:** I shall be visiting Bonn on 19 May and hope to see the Eurocopter Tiger during my visit. My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to visit Eurocopter in the near future to discuss procurement policy.

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence pursuant to his answer of 26 April, *Official Report*, columns *586-87*, if he will place in the Library a summary of the six reports on the cost and operational effectiveness investment appraisal of the EH101 helicopter. [22330]

**Mr. Freeman:** No summary exists, and one could be prepared only at disproportionate cost. Furthermore, the material on which it would be based is both classified and commercially confidential. It would not be appropriate to place such material in the Library.

### Equal Opportunities

24. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will take steps to increase the representations of women and of people from ethnic minorities in senior ranks in the armed forces. [20099]

**Mr. Freeman:** Promotion in the armed forces is on merit and positive discrimination would be unlawful. Opportunities for promotion to the most senior ranks exist for service personnel irrespective of their ethnic origin. Although some areas of employment remain closed to women on grounds of operational effectiveness, many

new employment opportunities have been opened to them in recent years.

### Polaris

25. **Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how soon he expects to be able to withdraw the last Polaris submarine. [20100]

**Mr. Freeman:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) on 20 April, *Official Report*, column *224*.

### Northern Ireland (Troops)

26. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the number of troops in Northern Ireland. [20101]

**Mr. Freeman:** There are currently some 17,500 armed forces personnel in Northern Ireland. In addition, the units which have recently been relocated from Northern Ireland remain available to the general officer commanding and can return at short notice if required. Force levels are kept under review to ensure that they remain appropriate to the security situation.

### Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty

27. **Mr. Jim Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is Her Majesty's Government's position on the non-proliferation treaty negotiations. [20102]

**Mr. Freeman:** The nuclear non-proliferation treaty is the cornerstone of international efforts to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons. We are committed to securing its unconditional and indefinite extension at the current NPT review and extension conference of states parties in New York.

### Departmental Budget

29. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what portion of his budget in cash and as a percentage is spent on *(a)* service pay and *(b)* the pay of ancillary staff; what were the equivalent figures 20 years ago; and if he will make a statement. [20104]

**Mr. Freeman:** In 1995–96 my Department has budgeted for a service pay bill inclusive of associated allowances and expenses of £6,065 million which represents 26.9 per cent. of its budget. The pay bill inclusive of associated allowances and expenses for the civilian staff of the Department has been budgeted for at £2,485 million which equates to 11 per cent. of the Department's total budget.

Comparable figures for money actually spent in financial year 1975–76 are some £1,304 million for service pay which amounted to 24.6 per cent. of the total budget that year and £988 million for civilian staff which represented 18.6 per cent.

### Royal Naval College, Greenwich

30. **Mr. Raynsford:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about future use of the historic buildings at Greenwich currently occupied by the Royal Naval college. [20105]

**Mr. Freeman:** As we have previously made clear, we do not intend to reach any firm conclusions on the future of the Royal Naval college, Greenwich at this stage, but will shortly be seeking expressions of interest in the site from organisations able to propose uses sympathetic to the character of the buildings.

A campaign will be launched in the next few weeks, about which we are consulting English Heritage and the local planning authorities, with a view to defining suitable alternative uses and maintenance arrangements. We shall consult further with these bodies later in the year when we come to evaluate the expressions of interest submitted as a result of the campaign.

We hope to be in a position to make an announcement on the future of Greenwich by the end of the year.

### US Airlines (Contracts)

**Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much will be spent by his Department in contracts with US airlines in the current financial year. [20093]

**Mr. Freeman:** My Department has spent an estimated £775,000 with US airlines in the financial year 1994–95 and I would expect this level of expenditure to continue within the current financial year. This expenditure was in respect of duty travel on internal schedules and not associated with any specific contracts.

My Department is in the process of completing an open competition to privatise the UK to north America route. This will replace the existing VC10 schedule which operates between RAF Brize Norton and Dulles airport and will commence 1 September 1995. The contracts will be for both international flights from the UK—USA and Canada and provide the facility to book intercontinental internal travel for the MOD traveller at substantial discounts to the normal fares. Responses from the airlines sector were not limited to UK-registered operators.

Until the contracts are awarded I cannot be precise about the cost to my Department for this financial year which will be offset in part by the savings arising from the reassignment of the RAF VC10 aircraft on more essential operational tasks, such as air-to-air refuelling.

### Royal Fleet Auxiliary

**Ms Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the implications for United Kingdom security of the failure to reach agreement in respect of the pay award to the Royal Fleet Auxiliary. [21057]

**Mr. Soames:** Royal Fleet Auxiliary officers have already reached agreement on last year's pay award, and we hope that ratings will also vote for acceptance in their present ballot. If agreement is not reached, however, the security implications would depend on the nature and extent of any industrial action taken.

**Ms Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proposals he has to privatise the Royal Fleet Auxiliary; and if he will make a statement. [21058]

**Mr. Soames:** None. The Royal Fleet Auxiliary service operates in direct support of our front-line forces.

### Tornado

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the total cost of keeping a Tornado airborne for one hour. [21827]

**Mr. Soames:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) on 24 October 1994, *Official Report*, columns *499–500.*

### Bank Disposal

**Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all locations which have required clearance by bomb disposal teams since 1965 for each county council area in Wales indicating the year of clearance; and if he will make a statement. [20670]

**Mr. Soames:** Information in the form requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

### Chemical Weapons

**Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will now set up an independent medical assessment to examine the long-term health effects upon individual service men who participated in experiments at the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment at Porton Down. [21611]

**Mr. Soames:** There is no evidence to suggest that any of the service volunteers—approximately 6,900 in number—who have participated in studies at Porton Down over the past 40 years have suffered any harm to their health. I do not, therefore, consider it necessary to set up an independent medical assessment to examine any of the individuals concerned.

### VE Day (Merchant Navy)

**Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will set out the activities designed to recognise the role of Merchant Navy personnel included in the national programme to commemorate VE day; and if he will make a statement. [21712]

**Mr. Soames:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I have to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) on 28 April 1995, *Official Report*, column *772.*

### Empty Accommodation, Dorset

**Mr. Jamieson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the number of empty dwellings owned by his Department in the constituencies of Dorset, North; Dorset, South; and Dorset, West. [21713]

**Mr. Soames:** As at 31 March, my Department owned the following number of empty dwellings in the constituencies in question:

Dorset, North: 152
Dorset, South: 175
Dorset, West: 0

The vacant properties in Dorset, North are being held for a unit deployment from the north of England. Of the vacant properties in Dorset, South, 86 are in the process of being sold. The remainder are either undergoing or awaiting major maintenance work, already allotted to service families due to move in shortly or form part of the management margin needed to ensure that accommodation is available for entitled service families.

### RNAS Portland

**Mr. Jamieson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the benefits to be achieved by moving the RAF Osprey Squad from Portland to Yeovilton before the Lynx is replaced by the Merlin in 2005. [21714]

**Mr. Soames:** As explained in my Department's consultative document on the proposed closure of the royal naval air station at Portland, a copy of which is in the Library of the House, it will be possible to collocate the remaining Royal Navy Lynx helicopters at Yeovilton from 1999. The closure of RNAS Portland would result in significant savings to the defence budget.

### Railings, Devonport

**Mr. Jamieson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the materials being used recently to refurbish the railings around the royal naval base along Saltash road. [21718]

**Mr. Soames:** These railings form part of the east side of HM naval base, Devonport and were last partly refurbished in 1964. The materials used for the recent refurbishment were paint, including primer and undercoat, galvanised steel, lime stone, lime mortar and timber boarding.

### Civil Servants

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the individual value of each *(a)* compulsory early retirement and *(b)* flexible early retirement package received by civil servants leaving his Department on grounds of limited efficiency in each of the last five years. [22090]

**Mr. Freeman:** My Department does not keep central records of early retirement awards made on grounds of limited efficiency and the information requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The number of individuals released on such terms is as follows:

1990–91: 10
1991–92: 4
1992–93: 2
1993–94: 3
1994–95: 1

### RAF Chicksands

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proposals his Department is considering with regard to the future of RAF Chicksands, Bedfordshire; and if he will make a statement. [22328]

**Mr. Soames:** With the US withdrawal from RAF Chicksands due to be completed by 30 September 1995, we are at present considering alternative defence uses for the site. Should no alternative defence uses be identified, we would consider the future of the site in consultation with the local authority.

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received from the Bedford community retirement group with regard to the future of RAF Chicksands, Bedfordshire. [22329]

**Mr. Soames:** The Bedford community retirement group wrote to my Department in March enclosing a copy of its proposals for the future use of RAF Chicksands. The proposals are a matter for the local authority, however, and this was made clear in my Department's response of 11 April.

### Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions he has had with his Russian counterpart concerning the renegotiation of the conventional forces in Europe treaty; what consideration he has given to the renegotiation of the conventional forces in Europe treaty; and if he will make a statement. [22297]

**Mr. Soames:** We maintain a dialogue with the Russians at all levels about issues which might affect their compliance with the conventional forces in Europe treaty.

Renegotiation of the treaty is not a subject which has been discussed. The treaty is widely recognised as the cornerstone of European security and it is in everyone's interest to see it fully implemented. To that end, we continue to urge all states parties, including Russia, to meet their obligations under the treaty, as only by doing so will the basis be created for a constructive review of the treaty's operation at the May 1996 treaty review conference.

### Information to Members

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence to which right hon. and hon. Members his special adviser, Mr. Crispin Blunt, has written to inform them of the placing of contracts by his Department in their constituency; what are the values of these contracts; which contracts were involved; what assistance the civil service provides in order to ensure the efficiency of this system of informing hon. Members; when this system was first introduced; and if he will make a statement. [22298]

**Mr. Rifkind:** In October 1993, my special adviser began writing to right hon. and hon. Members of all parties about MOD contracts awarded to firms in their constituencies which, while of local significance, were too small to merit individual announcements.

Since 1993, the practice has become more systematic, and standard letters are now sent about all contracts worth more than £1 million notified to the special adviser by the responsible contracts branch.

Since October 1993, more than 300 letters have been sent to right hon. and hon. Members.

### Commercial Exploitation Levies

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will specify how much money his Department received in each of the last 10 years from commercial exploitation levies in cases where it has funded the development of the exported equipment in question. [22299]

**Mr. Freeman:** The information requested is as follows:

| | *£ million* |
|---|---|
| 1986–87: | 29.2 |
| 1987–88: | 27.9 |
| 1988–89: | 44.0 |
| 1989–90: | 24.8 |
| 1990–91: | 16.7 |
| 1991–92: | 35.0 |
| 1992–93: | 15.3 |
| 1993–94: | 39.8 |

Details for 1984–85 and 1985–86 are not available. Final figures for 1994–95 have not been calculated.

### Land Mines

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 21 April, *Official Report*, column *306*, what types of anti-personnel mines other than Ranger mines his Department possesses; when they were purchased; from whom they were purchased; what was the total cost of the order; when they will need to be replaced; and if he will make a statement. [22300]

**Mr. Freeman:** My Department possesses the following anti-personnel mines, other than Rangers:

(a) Mine anti-personnel C3 (Elsie)

(b) Mine anti-personnel M18A1 (Claymore)

(c) Projector Area Defence L1E1 (PJRAD)

These mines were purchased as follows:

(a) C3 Elsie between 1965 and 1968 from Canadian Arsenals Ltd.

(b) M18A1 Claymore between 1965 and 1968, and in 1989 from the US Department of Defence.

(c) L1E1 PJRAD in 1986 from Royal Ordnance.

We no longer retain a record of the costs of these procurements, and there are currently no plans for their replacement.

### Mines

**Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those British companies which (i) have stockpiles of, (ii) are producing, (iii) have produced since 1965 and (iv) manufacture components for *(a)* anti-personnel mines, *(b)* area denial mines, *(c)* self-destruct mines and *(d)* other forms of mines; and in the case of (iii) if he will give the year in which production ceased.

**Mr. Freeman** *[holding answer 18 April 1995]:* These matters are the responsibility of the companies concerned. However, I am advised that the following information can be provided from my Department's records.

My Department classifies land mines by their effect, for example, anti-tank or anti-personnel. Any type of land mine can be self-destructing. We therefore do not recognise area denial mines or self-destructing mines as separate categories.

My Department is not aware of any British company holding stockpiles of land mines.

The "Defence Manufacturers' Handbook" lists British Aerospace Defence, British Aerospace (Royal Ordnance), Hunting Engineering, and Plalite as having land mines among their products. My Department is not aware that any of these companies is currently producing land mines and I can confirm that there are no current MOD orders for land mines, nor are there any current export licence applications.

My Department believes that Thorn EMI Electronics, Royal Ordnance and Hunting Engineering are the only British companies to have produced land mines since 1965.

Production of conventional anti-personnel land mines for the MOD ceased in 1983, and of anti-tank land mines in 1991.

In 1986 the Royal Ordnance factories produced a small number of projector area defence weapons for my Department. Previously, these were classified not as anti-personnel land mines, but as command-detonated point defence weapons. However, further research has now established that these weapons fall within the

standard NATO definition of a land mine. Consequently, previous statements that

"the UK has not produced anti-personnel mines for over a decade"

are not accurate in relation to the PJRAD.

My Department is not aware of any British companies which currently manufacture components for land mines.

### RAF Burtonwood

**Mr. Hall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the current weekly running costs of Burtonwood air base. [22183]

**Mr. Soames:** The running costs of RAF Burtonwood are estimated at some £8,000 per week, exclusive of any contribution in lieu of rates.

**Mr. Hall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current weekly income from the lorry and trailer park and associated activities on Burtonwood air base. [22184]

**Mr. Soames:** The income from the present commercial use of RAF Burtonwood is commercial-in-confidence between my Department and the occupiers.

### Market Testing

**Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 25 April, *Official Report*, column *498*, if he will list those activities in his Department which have been market-tested; and if he will specify in each case if in-house bids were permitted. [22338]

**Mr. Freeman:** In the three-year period since April 1992, a total of 101 defence support activities have been exposed to the "Competing for Quality" process as part of the drive to deliver, through the increased use of competition and private sector involvement, high-quality and more cost-effective support to the armed forces. Of these, 23 have been exposed to competition from external contractors, with an in-house bid in each case, ie market-tested, to ensure that the service is delivered in a way which gives best value for money. The market tests involved, and the results of each, are as follows:

Gardening at RM units Poole, CTCRM Lympstone and COMMACHIO group—all three won by in-house bid team.

Mechanical handling equipment, repair and maintenance, Devonport—won by in-house team.

18 base workshop, army base repair organisation, Bovington—won by in-house team.

RAOC print section, Northern Ireland—won by in-house team.

Air weapon range, RAF Cowden—won by in-house team.

Support services, Gateway house, RAF Brize Norton—won by in-house team.

Aircraft support services, Boscombe Down—won by in-house team.

Elements of experimental flying programme, Bedford/Boscombe Down—won by in-house team.

Second line engineering support, flag officer naval aviation, Yeovilton—activity contractorised following a market test with in-house bid.

Industrial mess (catering and stewardship function), defence postal and courier service, Mill Hill, London—activity contractorised following a market test with in-house bid.

Ration delivery service, Northern Ireland—activity contractorised following a market test with in-house bid.

Tailoring, Northern Ireland—activity contractorised following a market test with in-house bid.

Air weapon range, RAF Holbeach—activity contractorised following a market test with in-house bid.

Flight checking, 115 Squadron, RAF Benson—activity contractorised following a market test with in-house bid.

Inspectorate of recruitment exhibition production flight, RAF Henlow—activity contractorised following a market test with in-house bid.

Nimrod major servicing unit, RAF Kinloss—activity contractorised following a market test with in-house bid.

Airfield services, RAF Gibraltar—activity contractorised following a market test with in-house bid.

IT processing DIGITS operations west, Devizes—activity contractorised following a market test with in-house bid.

Property Management, Central London—activity contractorised following a market test with in-house bid.

Mess catering, Boscombe Down—activity contractorised following a market test with in-house bid.

Trident in-service support—activity contractorised following a market test with in-house bid.

# Written Answers to Questions

*Wednesday 3 May 1995*

## ATTORNEY-GENERAL

### Bernard Manning

**Mr. Soley:** To ask the Attorney-General whether he will consider instituting proceedings under section 18 of the Public Order Act 1986 against *(a)* Bernard Manning and *(b)* the organisers of the Haydock Park police social event on Friday 10 March. [21314]

**The Attorney-General:** The question of prosecution does not arise unless there has first been a criminal investigation. It is the function of the police to investigate alleged criminal offences and the hon. Member should place any evidence which he considers discloses an offence in the hands of the relevant chief officer of police.

**Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will obtain from Granada Television a transcript of the recent address by the comedian Bernard Manning at a social event organised by members of the Greater Manchester police with a view to considering a prosecution for incitement to racial hatred; and if he will make a statement. [21304]

**The Attorney-General:** No. The investigation of any criminal offence which is alleged to have been committed is the function of the police.

If the hon. Member has reason to believe that an offence has been committed he should report the matter to the police.

### Barings Bank

**Mr. MacShane:** To ask the Attorney-General what investigation are being undertaken in regard to those executives at Barings responsible for the criminal offence mentioned by the Governor of the Bank of England in his oral evidence to the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee hearing of 5 April. [21133]

**The Attorney-General:** I understand that the hon. Member has in mind a possible contravention of section 38(9) of the Banking Act 1987. Such offences are normally investigated and prosecuted by the Bank of England.

The wider inquiries by the director of the Serious Fraud Office into the affairs of Barings bank continue. If information comes to light during those inquiries relevant to possible offences contrary to section 38 then that information will be made available to the Bank of England.

**Mr. MacShane:** To ask the Attorney-General when he expects the Director of Public Prosecutions to report on his investigation into Mr. Nick Leeson. [21134]

**The Attorney-General:** It is the director of the Serious Fraud Office rather than the Director of Public Prosecutions who is investigating matters relating to Barings bank. It is too soon to say when the inquiry will be complete.

## LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

### Asylum Seekers

**Mr. Gerrard:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department of those people who sought asylum in the United Kingdom in the last year for which figures are available, were refused asylum, and were subsequently refused an appeal, how many were given leave to appeal to the Immigration appeal tribunal; and, of these *(a)* how many were allowed by the Immigration appeal tribunal and *(b)* how many were remitted for a further hearing before a special adjudicator. [21283]

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** In 1994, 355 asylum appellants were granted leave to appeal to the immigration appeal tribunal. Of these, *(a)* eight appeals were allowed by the immigration appeal tribunal and *(b)* 192 were remitted for a fresh hearing before a special adjudicator.

**Mr. Gerrard:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department of those people who sought asylum in the United Kingdom in the last year for which figures are available and were refused asylum, how many *(a)* gave notice of appeal, *(b)* were certified by the Secretary of State as being manifestly unfounded and *(c)* had their appeals determined; and, of these, how many applications which were certified by the Secretary of State as being without foundation were allowed by a special adjudicator. [21310]

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** *(a)* In 1994, the immigration appellate authorities received 6,045 asylum appeals; *(b)* of these, 872 were certified by the Secretary of State to be claims without foundation under the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993; *(c)* approximately 2,400 cases were determined in 1994. Figures are not available as to how many "without foundation" appeals were successful during that year but will be available for cases dealt with thereafter.

### Immigration

**Mr. Gerrard:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department in the last year for which figures are available, of all immigration—non-asylum—appeals which were refused, how many were given leave to appeal to the immigration appeal tribunal; and of these *(a)* how many were allowed by the immigration appeal tribunal and *(b)* how many were remitted for a further hearing before an adjudicator. [21281]

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** In 1994, 977 applications for leave to appeal were granted; of these 253 appeals were allowed and 418 were remitted for a fresh hearing before an adjudicator.

**Mr. Gerrard:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many substantive immigration appeals were *(a)* heard and *(b)* allowed in each of the hearing centres in the United Kingdom in the last year for which figures are available in each of the following categories: (i) spouses, (ii) fiancé(s), (iii) children, (iv) dependant relatives other than children and (v) long-term students. [21282]

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** *(a)* The number of substantive appeals heard in each of the hearing centres in 1994 is set out in the following table. The immigration appellate authorities do not hold figures for the categories referred to.

| *Hearing centre* | *Appeals heard at an oral hearing* | *Appeals determined on the papers* |
|---|---|---|
| Thanet House, London | 5,700 | 3,283 |
| Hatton Cross, Middlesex, Cardiff and Belfast | 4,428 | 2,058 |
| Birmingham | 2,360 | 1,440 |
| Manchester | 1,782 | 619 |
| Leeds | 1,357 | 513 |
| Glasgow | 391 | 89 |

*(b)* In 1994, 3,657 appeals were allowed. The number of appeals allowed was as follows for each of the following categories:

| | |
|---|---|
| (i) Husbands | 568 |
| (ii) Wives/Children/Other Dependant Relatives | 479 |
| (iii) Fiancés | 86 |
| (iv) Fiancées | 31 |
| (v) Long-term students | Figures not available |

Figures are not available to provide a breakdown of appeals by individual hearing centre.

**Mr. Gerrard:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department in the last year for which figures are available, how many listed immigration appeals were adjourned *(a)* once and *(b)* more than once; how many adjournments were granted at the request of the applicant; and how many on the notice of the court. [21280]

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** The immigration appellate authorities do not maintain a separate record of those cases which have been adjourned and the information sought could be obtained only at disproportionate cost, by going through the individual records for all cases heard during the year.

### Court Delays, London

**Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what was the average delay in waiting for court cases in London *(a)* in Crown courts and *(b)* in magistrates courts calculated from the charging by police of an alleged offender. [21896]

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** In the magistrates courts the average time taken in London in 1994, for indictable-triable either-way offences from charge or summons to first listing was 25 days and the average time taken from first listing to completion was 54 days.

In relation to the Crown courts, the question concerns a specific operational matter on which the chief executive of the Court Service is best placed to provide an answer and I have accordingly asked the chief executive to reply direct.

*Letter from M. D. Huebner to Mrs. Barbara Roche, dated 1 May 1995:*

The Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, has asked me to reply to your Question about the waiting time for criminal court cases in London.

I should explain that I cannot provide information on Magistrates' Courts, which are not part of the Court Service; I understand that the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department will respond separately with the information you requested.

So far as the Crown Court is concerned, waiting times are measured from the date the defendant is first committed from the Magistrates Court to the date the defendant enters a guilty plea to all charges or the jury is sworn in at the trial. For the 3 months ending 31 March 1995, the average waiting time in the London Crown Courts was 15.37 weeks.

### Statute of Westminster

**Mr. Mackinley:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will make it his policy to consult other countries under section 2 of the Statute of Westminster 1931 before bringing forward proposals to amend the Regency Act 1937. [22004]

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** It is the Government's policy to consult as appropriate before introducing legislation.

### Legislative Repeal Bills

**Mr. Mackinley:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the criteria by which the Law Commission and the Joint Committee on Consolidation, &c. Bills consider items for inclusion in Statute Law (Repeals) Bills. [22005]

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** The criteria are set out in section 3(1) of the Law Commissions Act 1965 and in the standing orders of both Houses of Parliament.

**Mr. Mackinley:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will refer for consideration to the Law Commission His Majesty's Declaration of Abdication Act 1936 for possible repeal. [22096]

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** That is not my intention.

## ENVIRONMENT

### Air Pollution

**Mr. William O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the effect slow moving heavy duty vehicles have on air pollution. [21671]

**Mr. Atkins:** The table illustrates that slow moving traffic emits more carbon monoxide—CO—and non methane volatile organic compound—NMVOC—than faster moving traffic. However, the latter emit more oxides of nitrogen—NOx.

*Emission factors for road transport (g/km)*

| *Vehicle type* | *Small HGV (<16 litres)* | *Large HGV (>16 litres)* |
|---|---|---|
| *Urban (Average 15–20 mph)* | | |
| CO | 6.00 | 7.30 |
| NOx | 12.60 | 16.95 |
| NMVOC | 6.412 | 6.78 |

*Emission factors for road transport (g/km)*

| *Vehicle type* | *Small HGV (<16 litres)* | *Large HGV (>16 litres)* |
|---|---|---|
| *Rural Dual (Average 40–50 mph)* | | |
| CO | 2.90 | 3.70 |
| NOx | 16.05 | 20.04 |
| NMVOC | 3.21 | 3.21 |
| *Motorway (Average 60 mph)* | | |
| CO | 2.90 | 3.10 |
| NOx | 16.05 | 20.04 |
| NMVOC | 3.21 | 3.21 |

*Source:*
UK emissions of air pollutants—Gillham et al, Warren Spring Laboratory Report Number: LR 961.

### Wildlife Conservation

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many warning letters his Department has issued where offences in apparent contravention of wildlife law have been disclosed in the last five years. [21830]

**Sir Paul Beresford:** It would not be in the interests of bird conservation to publish the detailed information sought by the hon. Member about potential wildlife offences dealt with by my Department. Such information could be of use to those evading or intending to evade the controls. I will write to the hon. Member.

### Local Government Finance

**Mr. Channon:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he proposes to announce his proposals for local government tax before the end of July; and if he will make a statement. [21812]

**Mr. Curry:** As usual, proposals for the 1996–97 local government finance settlement will be announced soon after the Chancellor has made his Budget statement. Levels of council tax will depend upon Budget decisions taken by local authorities.

### River Inspections

**Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how often the National Rivers Authority has taken action to enforce the provisions of abstraction licences granted under the Water Acts of 1963 and 1989; and if he will make a statement. [21987]

**Mr. Atkins:** The information conveniently available shows the following action:

| *Year* | *Enforcement inspections* | *Formal cautions or prosecutions* |
|---|---|---|
| 1993–94 | 18,470 | 19 |
| 1994–95 | 19,925 | 25 |

Inspections may also result in advice or informal warning.

**Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how often the National Rivers Authority reviews current abstraction licences granted under the Water Acts of 1963 and 1989; and if he will make a statement. [21988]

**Mr. Atkins:** The information requested is shown on page 102 of the National Rivers Authority's annual report and accounts for 1993–94. A total of 18,470 abstraction licences out of a total 48,189 were inspected in 1993–94. A table showing actual and forecast inspections from 1989–90 to 1997–98 is also given on page 43 in the National Rivers Authority's corporate plan for 1994–95.

### CITES

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made concerning enforcement issues following the ninth conference of the parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species. [21829]

**Sir Paul Beresford:** For actions taken by the United Kingdom concerning CITES enforcement issues, I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 30 March 1995, *Official Report*, column *736*.

### Protected Birds

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) pursuant to his answer of 22 March, *Official Report*, columns *226-27*, what means are employed for checking for previous convictions from applicants; [21877]

(2) how many potential offences his Department identified and pursued as a result of monitoring national trade journals prior to November 1994, relating to the sale of birds listed in appendix I of CITES and annexe CI of EC regulation 3626–82; [21870]

(3) what factors led to nine of the 26 potential sales offences being passed to the police; [21871]

(4) how many specimens of Livingstone's Turaco were advertised for sale during the period that his Department has been monitoring the trade journals; [21872]

(5) how many times information has been followed up by the Department's wildlife inspectorate, when doubt concerning an application has been raised; [21875]

(6) how many times premises have been inspected to ensure that any conditions attached to sales exemptions have been met; [21876]

(7) when the first police officer was designated as an authorised person under the Control of Trade in Endangered Species (Enforcement) Regulation 1985. [21883]

**Sir Paul Beresford** *[holding answer 2 March 1995]:* It would not be in the interests of bird conservation to publish the detailed information sought by the hon. Member about potential wildlife offences dealt with by my Department. Such information could be of use to those evading or intending to evade the controls. I will write to the hon. Member.

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 22 March, *Official Report*, column *226*, when his Department intends to register the bird species listed in CITES appendix I and annexe CI of EC regulation 3626/82, that are not currently required to be registered and ringed if kept in captivity. [21873]

**Sir Paul Beresford** *[holding answer 2 May 1995]:* Following our review of the secondary controls on

wildlife, we have invited our scientific advisers, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, to advise on the criteria for listing the species which must be ringed and registered with the Department, by the middle of next year.

The agreed criteria will be used to carry out the first review of schedule 4 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. The results should be submitted to my Department by December 1997. We shall consider, in the light of this, whether any additions or deletions to the species listed in schedule 4 are necessary.

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 22 March, *Official Report*, column *226*, what proposals he has to ensure that individual birds of significant conservation concern advertised for sale can be uniquely identified. [21874]

**Sir Paul Beresford:** *[holding answer 2 May 1995]*: We shall continue to ensure that sales exemptions are issued only when we are satisfied that there are no significant risks to the conservation of the species concerned. The enforcement working group, which I announced on 20 December in my reply to the hon. Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson), *Official Report*, columns *1115-16*, will be looking at the current arrangements for the marking of specimens, and considering whether any changes are required.

### British Gas (Sites Redevelopment)

**Mr. Robert Ainsworth:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the sites owned by British Gas where *(a)* discussions regarding grant aid have occurred, *(b)* grant aid has been formally applied for and *(c)* grant aid has been approved in order to redevelop the sites giving, in each case, the amount of aid involved and including grant aid from his Department, urban development corporations and any other relevant publicly funded bodies. [20410]

**Sir Paul Beresford:** The Department and the regeneration bodies it supports have allocated grant for the redevelopment of sites owned by British Gas in the following instances:

| *Project* | *Programme* | *Amount of grant £ million* |
|---|---|---|
| Pleck Gasworks | Walsall City Challenge | 1.385 |
| Pride Park (with ABBT and British Rail Property Board) | Derby Pride Ltd (City Challenge) | 12.8 (paid to Derby City Council) |
| Windsor Street Reclamation | Birmingham Heartlands Development Corporation | 0.2 |
| Grand Islan | Central Manchester Development Corporation | 4.4 |
| Leeds City Office Park | Leeds Development Corporation | 0.5 |

In addition, there have been discussions on possible projects at Foleshill gasworks, Coventry; West Dyke road, Redcar; Redditch gasworks; Greenwich peninsula; Ladbroke grove, north Kensington; and Crawford street, Birmingham.

## TRANSPORT

### Road Casualties

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what new proposals he has further to reduce road casualties. [22222]

**Mr. Norris:** We are continuing to implement the measures which I described to the hon. Member in my reply of 19 December 1994, *Official Report* column *873*.

### Woolwich Rail Tunnel

**Mr. Austin-Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received regarding the proposed Woolwich rail tunnel; if he will hold a public consultation; and when he expects to make a decision. [22371]

**Mr. Norris:** I am aware of the hon. Member's support for the Woolwich rail tunnel project and have discussed it in the past both with him and local representatives.

Railtrack, British Rail, London Transport and the London Docklands development corporation are currently working to define and develop the outline scheme. I understand that they intend to consult publicly on this work at an appropriate stage, and I look forward to seeing the results. The scheme is also likely to be included in the Government office for London's forthcoming consultation on river crossings in east London.

### Woolwich Metro

**Mr. Austin-Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the importance of the proposed Woolwich metro to the east Thames gateway strategy. [22372]

**Mr. Norris:** The proposals are at an early stage. But, as indicated in the draft Thames gateway planning framework, the metro concept could assist regeneration by extending potential labour markets.

### East London River Crossing

**Mr. Austin-Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to issue a consultation document on the proposed east London river crossing; what will be the period for consultation; and when he expects to make a decision. [22373]

**Mr. Norris:** I hope to publish shortly a consultation document on a range of options for river crossings on the Thames east of Tower bridge. I envisage a consultation period of three months. The timing of any subsequent decisions will depend on the outcome of the consultation.

### M25

**Ms Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the full costs of the Rendel, Palmer and Tritton study into the M25, and further studies arising from that. [21580]

**Mr. Watts:** The cost of the Rendel, Palmer and Tritton study, published in 1989, was £321,000, excluding VAT. Following publication in 1990 of the M25 action plan, the Department of Transport's response to public comments on the RPT report, five studies were commissioned. These investigated possible improvements to junctions and

options for additional capacity on the M25. The total cost of these studies was £4.682 million, excluding VAT.

As a result of the studies, the agency has carried forward the design for widening nearly 88 miles or 80 per cent. of the M25 to dual four lanes. Construction works have been completed or are in progress on 13 miles of the M25, with works on a further 12 miles due to start in June of this year. Comments from the public on proposals for widening are currently being considered on another 34 miles of the M25.

**Ms Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) on what basis he is assessing projected traffic growth on the M25 beyond 2010; [21582]

(2) what proposals he has to reassess national traffic forecasts in respect of the M25 in the light of the Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment; and if he will make a statement. [21576]

**Mr. Watts:** The assessment of traffic growth up to and beyond 2010 will be based on the Department of Transport's national road traffic forecasts, taking into account local traffic forecasts which reflect local growth in population and car ownership.

The proposals will be assessed to see if the changes in traffic looked at by the Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment in its recently published report are likely to be significant. An assessment summarising the technical and economic analysis of the scheme, including traffic projections, will be published at the same time as the environmental statement.

**Ms Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set out his timetable for new traffic management arrangements between junctions 12 and 16 on the M25. [21581]

**Mr. Watts:** A traffic management pilot project with the use of variable speed limits and camera enforcement will start on the motorway shortly. It uses automatic sensors to monitor traffic flows and activates signals to reduce speeds at congested times. This builds on to a longer term programme for introducing automatic incident detection systems on the motorway network.

### Equal Opportunities

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made within his Department on equal opportunities matters. [21466]

**Mr. Norris:** The Department of Transport has been actively pursuing the civil service programmes for action on race, women and disability, and was one of the first Departments to produce a joint action plan covering all three areas.

Particular emphasis has been given to developing training and complaints procedures and to making it easier for disabled people and for women with family commitments to work in the Department.

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress he hopes to achieve in his Department over the next three months to push forward the declaration signed in October 1994 at the Vienna conference in preparation for the fourth UN conference on women; and if he will agree to incorporate a section on equal opportunities in his Department's annual report. [21468]

**Mr. Norris:** The Government are committed to the principles set out in the regional platform for action agreed at the preparatory conference in Vienna for the fourth UN world conference on women. DOT has taken these forward through a wide range of programmes and initiatives and will continue to do so. In accordance with the terms of the Command Paper, "The Civil Service–Taking Forward Continuity and Change", the Department will publish information on equal opportunities in annual reports from 1995–96.

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which Minister in his Department has responsibility for equal opportunities issues. [21465]

**Mr. Norris:** I have overall responsibility for equal opportunities issues within the Department of Transport.

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the gender assessment being prepared by his Department. [21467]

**Mr. Norris:** Department of Transport policy, in line with guidelines issued in 1992 by the ministerial group on women's issues, is that policy proposals should ensure that unlawful or unjustifiable sex or race discrimination does not occur and that similar principles apply to people with disabilities, older people or ex-offenders. This scrutiny is part of a continuous and routine process, as part of policy advice to Ministers.

## TRADE AND INDUSTRY

### Cable Television

**Sir Nicholas Bonsor:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps are being taken to monitor the behaviour of cable television operators by central Government. [20718]

**Mr. Ian Taylor:** My officials monitor the behaviour of cable operators through a continuous assessment of statistical evidence, through discussions with operators, and by handling individual complaints. Broadcast entertainment is subject to normal Independent Television Commission licensing and content requirements.

### Cable Communications

**Ms Coffey:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his oral answer to the hon. Member for Milton Keynes North-East (Mr. Butler), of 5 April, *Official Report*, column *1722*, and his answer of 27 April, *Official Report*, column *662*, on what date he expects all schools in the area for which the Communications Association has franchises to be connected to the cable network; and if he will make a statement. [22217]

**Mr. Ian Taylor** *[holding answer 2 May 1995]:* Schools will be progressively linked to cable networks as cable operators install their systems.

The existing cable franchises networks, covering some two-thirds of the population, are likely to be virtually compete by the end of 2000. The new local delivery operator franchises now being awarded, which permit radio delivery of services, are expected to extend cable type coverage to around 80 to 85 per cent. of the United

Kingdom population. The Radiocommunications Agency has announced plans for use of radio spectrum in more rural areas.

### Smoking

**Mr. Peter Griffiths:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what facilities are provided and arrangements made for the well-being and comfort of staff who *(a)* smoke and *(b)* do not wish to be affected by smoking at (i) the work-station and (ii) rest, recreation and refreshment facilities at Ashdown house, 123 Victoria street, London. [21913]

**Mr. Ian Taylor:** This Department's policy is to ban smoking in general office areas. Smoking is allowed only in designated smoking rooms and areas. Smoking is not permitted in the staff restaurant at Ashdown house during the luncheon period. Smoking is permitted in a separate area at other times.

A copy of my Department's current smoking policy is available in the House of Commons Library.

### Nuclear Industry

**Mr. McFall:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to privatise the nuclear energy industry. [22036]

**Mr. Page:** The nuclear review is nearing completion. An announcement will be made shortly.

**Mr. McFall:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what funds are available for decommissioning and waste disposal in the nuclear industry. [22063]

**Mr. Page:** The Department of Trade and Industry provides to the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority the funds required to undertake its programme of work on nuclear decommissioning and the management of radioactive waste arising from government nuclear programmes. The provision of funds in respect of the decommissioning and waste disposal liabilities of other parts of the nuclear industry is a matter for the companies concerned: their annual accounts report on the relevant provisions.

**Mr. McFall:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what measurements he has made of the security and safety implications of a privatised nuclear energy industry. [22030]

**Mr. Page:** Safety is of paramount importance and will continue to be so irrespective of ownership.

**Mr. McFall:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his estimate of the asset value of the nuclear energy industry in England and Wales. [22029]

**Mr. Page:** I refer the hon. Member to the annual reports and accounts of the relevant companies, copies of which are available in the Library of the House.

### Nuclear Plant, Taiwan

**Mr. McFall:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what negotiations he has had with the Taiwan Government regarding the joint bid by Nuclear Electric and Westinghouse for the building of a nuclear power plant in that country. [22035]

**Mr. Page:** The United Kingdom Government supported Nuclear Electric's bid for the Lungmen project but does not take part in commercial negotiations regarding any international bid.

### Sizewell B

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what emergency storage facilities exist at the Sizewell B reactor for nuclear fuel rods withdrawn from the reactor core should an accident occur while the interim on site storage ponds are being completed. [22034]

**Mr. Page:** I understand that the fuel storage pond at Sizewell B was commissioned before nuclear fuel was accepted on site. There has therefore been no need for any interim storage facilities, nor is there a need for any additional emergency storage facility. If fuel failures should occur, the failed fuel can be withdrawn from the reactor core using the normal fuel handling equipment and can then be stored safely in the fuel storage pond.

### Metrication

**Sir Teddy Taylor:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what estimate he has made of the additional costs involved, including the disposal of surplus materials for *(a)* the public service and *(b)* the United Kingdom economy which will stem from the implementation of the European Community directives which require all references to imperial measures to be stopped, with the exception of the area of exemption set out in the Health and Safety Executive document OM 1995/121 appendix 5. [21997]

**Mr. Jonathan Evans** *[holding answer 1 May 1995]:* The cost to business of compliance with legislation to implement Council directive 89/617/EEC on harmonisation of units of measurement was considered to be about £35 million spread over a period of six years. This does not take into account the benefits which will accrue from metrication. The costs to the public sector were not considered to be significant.

## HOME DEPARTMENT

### Identity Cards

**Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what calculations his Department has made in respect of the cost of issuing an ID card. [21894]

**Mr. Nicholas Baker:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) on 27 April 1995, column *674*.

### Daylight Saving

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to introduce proposals on daylight saving; and if he will make a statement. [22221]

**Mr. Nicholas Baker:** Our policy on future summer time arrangements, including whether to move to central European time, remains under consideration.

### Electoral Registration

**Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration he has given to implementing the conclusion of his Department's working group report on electoral registration in respect of the provision to transfer electoral qualification from one address to another when an elector moves. [22381]

**Mr. Nicholas Baker:** I understand that the working group on electoral registration considered the issue only in the context of rolling registration where it came to no firm conclusion.

### Bogus Marriages

**Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what percentage of those individuals involved in marriages between British citizens and non-British, non-EU citizens which were adjudged to be bogus by his Department were deported in each year since 1989; [21514]

(2) how many individuals involved in marriages between British citizens and non-British, non-EU citizens which were adjudged to be bogus by his Department were deported in each year since 1989. [21815]

**Mr. Nicholas Baker:** The information requested is not available. The deportation statistics do not identify separately cases involving a bogus marriage.

### Citizenship Applications

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his practice to publish his reasons for refusing an applications for United Kingdom citizenship where an applicant wishes this to be done. [21952]

**Mr. Nicholas Baker:** No.

### Mahogany

**Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many metres of mahogany or products containing it his Department has bought in the last five years; and if he will list the purposes and the costs. [19836]

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** Between September 1993 and March 1995, 132m$^3$ of African mahogany was purchased, costing £70,000 for use in prison workshops for the construction of furniture for sale and order. The supplier purchases hardwood from controlled areas in line with Government guidelines to the timber trade.

Information is not available for the period prior to September 1993.

Home Office policy on the purchase of wood is, as far as possible, to ensure that wood used in building works and furniture comes from sustainably-managed forests.

## EMPLOYMENT

### Earnings, North-West

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many full-time employees in the north-west earn less than £2 an hour. [21546]

**Mr. Oppenheim:** It is estimated from the autumn 1994 labour force survey that approximately 1.7 per cent. of full-time employees in the north-west earn less than £2 per hour. A total of 78.1 per cent. earn more than £4 per hour.

### Building Society Takeover

**Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many jobs he estimates will be at risk in the United Kingdom if the proposed takeover of the National and Provincial building society takes place. [21931]

**Miss Widdecombe:** No such estimate is available.

**Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many jobs he estimates will be at lost in Yorkshire if the proposed takeover by Abbey National of the National and Provincial building society took place. [21906]

**Miss Widdecombe:** No such estimate is available.

### Pay Rates

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he will make it his policy for job centres to establish with employers the minimum rate of pay for jobs they advertise when the rate is negotiable and to refuse to display advertisements for jobs paying £1 an hour or less; [22211]

(2) what discretion is allowed to jobcentre managers in deciding whether to accept a job advertisement where the wage rate offered is unreasonably low. [22281]

**Miss Widdecombe:** Responsibility for the subject of the questions has been delegated to the Employment Service under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

*Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Gordon Prentice, dated 3 May 1995:*

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your questions about the policy for servicing vacancies where the wages are negotiable or paying £1 an hour or less and what discretion is allowed to Jobcentre managers to refuse an unreasonably low paid job.

Wage levels are a matter for agreement between employers and employees and the Employment Service has no role in policing them. However, guidance to staff in Jobcentres is that where an employer notifies a vacancy offering low pay, or with wages below the prevailing rates for the district, they should advise the employer of the local rates of pay for the job. Where employers insist on offering low pay, they are advised that their vacancy may be difficult to fill.

My people in Jobcentres will also encourage employers to state a rate of pay where they indicate that wages are negotiable, so that potential applicants have as much information as possible before attending a job interview.

In some instances, jobs offering what appears to be a low basic rate of pay may have opportunities to enhance earnings through bonus and commission payments, or offer other benefits such as accommodation. Employers are also encouraged to make these clear in the specification of their vacancy.

Until 30 August 1993 in certain industries minimum rates of pay were laid down in Wages Council Orders. Since the abolition of Wages Councils, only agricultural wages are covered by Acts of Parliament and guidance has been issued to Jobcentres to refer any enquiries relating to rates of pay for agricultural workers to the Agricultural Wages Board, or the Scottish Agricultural Wages Board.

Whilst Jobcentres will advise an employer offering low pay the difficulties in filling such a vacancy, there is no legal reason why they could refuse to handle their vacancy. We have to accept that the ultimate decision on the wages offered is left to the employer.

I hope this is helpful.

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the lowest hourly rate of pay for a job advertised at the jobcentres in Nelson and Colne

for the latest 12 month period for which figures are available. [22203]

**Miss Widdecombe:** Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

*Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Gordon Prentice, dated 3 May 1995:*

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about the lowest wage rate advertised for vacancies notified to Nelson and Colne Jobcentres over the last twelve months.

The information you have requested is not recorded. Supervacs, the computer system used to process notified vacancies, is designed to work as a vacancy recording and circulation system. It does not retain information other than basic data such as Standard Occupational Classification and Standard Industrial Classification. Details such as wage rates, hours of work and job description are not retained by the system once the vacancy is filled or closed.

I am sorry I cannot be more helpful.

### South Thames TEC

**Ms Jowell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has replied to an inquiry from Commissioner Padraig Flynn regarding donations to the South Thames training and enterprise council from the European social fund.

**Mr. Paice:** The Department replied to the European Commission on this matter on 2 May 1995.

## AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

### Livestock Hauliers

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many journey plans were submitted by hauliers of livestock through *(a)* Shoreham port, *(b)* Plymouth docks, *(c)* Dover port, *(d)* Brightlingsea docks and *(e)* Coventry airport in each month since such journey plans became compulsory; how many of these plans were not adhered to; and how many have been submitted for future journeys. [20604]

**Mrs. Browning** *[holding answer 1 May 1995]:* Journey plans were compulsory for certain journeys from 1 January 1993. The Welfare of Animals during Transport Order 1994 made journey plans compulsory in a specified format for any journey likely to take more than 15 hours, with effect from 23 January 1995. Between this latter date and 7 April, 1995 journey plans have been checked by the Ministry. This figure cannot readily be broken down in the way requested. Exporters are advised to give the Ministry 10 days' notice of an intention to export animals, and in practice not all intended journeys take place. Arrangements exist to carry out spot checks on the details declared in the journey plans with co-operation from certain member states, and inquiries are continuing in a number of cases.

### Live Animal Exports

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer of 4 April, *Official Report*, column *1058*, how it is possible for calves to be fed a liquid feed while on a lorry. [21088]

**Mrs. Browning** *[holding answer 1 May 1995]:* I am advised that calves could be fed aboard lorries in circumstances where the lorries were standing part-loaded and there was room for individual feeding. Facilities for the preparation of the liquid feed would also have to be available nearby.

### Contaminated Beef

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will show his assessment of the percentage of beef samples with traces of clenbuterol or other artificial promoters in each of the EC member states; how much of this contaminated beef finds it way into the British market; what concerns he has as to whether existing EC legislation to prevent the use of artificial growth promoters is effective; and if he will make a statement. [21315]

**Mrs. Browning:** Surveillance for concentrations of clenbuterol and other artificial growth promoters in beef is carried out in all member states under the terms of directive 86/469/EEC. I regret, however, that information on residues surveillance, comparable with that made available by the veterinary medicines directorate, is not published by other member states, and I cannot therefore comment on the position in those countries.

So far as domestic production is concerned, I can confirm that no clenbuterol positives have been identified in any sample collected from slaughterhouses in Great Britain under the national surveillance scheme since testing began in August 1989, nor have any of the samples tested for the banned hormonal growth promoters been found to be positive since 1992. Samples of beef and other meat and meat products are also purchased from retail outlets in the United Kingdom, under a separate surveillance programme which covers both home produced and imported meat products. During the period July 1993 to March 1994 one sample of calf liver imported from a member state was found to contain traces of clenbuterol below the maximum residue limit of 0.5µg/kg and did not present a hazard to human health.

The use of hormonal growth promoters is banned throughout the European Community, although this ban does not extend to clenbuterol which is an authorised veterinary medicine and available, under prescription, in several member states, including the UK, to treat respiratory ailments in calves and horses and to assist cattle at the time of calving. When used illegally, at high dosages, clenbuterol has similar growth promoting effects to the banned hormones. I am satisfied from the assurances that have been received from member states where a problem with the abuse of these substances is reported to exist, that urgent steps are being taken to stamp out any illegal use, and that consumer safety is not at risk from imported beef.

### Mink Farms

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the number of licensed mink farms in each year since 1989. [21190]

**Mrs. Browning** *[holding answer 1 May 1995]:* The number of licensed mink farms in England is as follows:

| Year | Number of licensed mink farms on 31 March of each year |
|---|---|
| 1989 | 52 |
| 1990 | 45 |
| 1991 | 26 |
| 1992 | 19 |
| 1993 | 20 |
| 1994 | 12 |
| 1995 | 13 |

## Animal Health

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many farm animals were identified as being unfit to travel in each month since January 1992. [21168]

**Mrs. Browning** *[holding answer 1 May 1995]:* The information is given in the following table for the years 1992, 1994 and 1995—to February. No figures are available for 1993.

*Farm animals inspected prior to export and rejected as unfit for transportation*

| | 1992 | 1994 | 1995 |
|---|---|---|---|
| January | 1,608 | not available | 1,259 |
| February | 1,116 | not available | 698 |
| March | 662 | 1,534 | — |
| April | 425 | 1,545 | — |
| May | 792 | 1,881 | — |
| June | 1,262 | 618 | — |
| July | 2,206 | 1,227 | — |
| August | 3,694 | 4,032 | — |
| September | 4,710 | 4,534 | — |
| October | 5,330 | 1,424 | — |
| November | 3,126 | 1,681 | — |
| December | 3,139 | 1,195 | — |

## Equal Opportunities

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which Minister in his Department has responsibility for equal opportunity issues. [21445]

**Mrs. Browning:** My right hon. Friend the Minister, has overall responsibility for all departmental issues. I have particular responsibility for equal opportunity issues.

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress has been made within his Department on equal opportunity matters. [21446]

**Mrs. Browning:** The Department continues to implement its strategy for equality of opportunity for women staff. In the past 12 months this has included the introduction of a career break scheme, an assessment of the suitability of posts for flexible working and increased child-care facilities. The departmental strategy for equality of opportunity for staff of ethnic minority origin has been relaunched. A departmental strategy on the employment of staff with disabilities is being formulated using results from a staff survey in which 600 staff reported a disability.

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish the gender assessment being prepared by his Department. [21447]

**Mrs. Browning:** The Department's policy, in line with guidance issued in 1992 by the ministerial group on women's issues, is that policy proposals should ensure that unlawful or unjustifiable discrimination against specific groups of people, including men and women, does not occur. This scrutiny is part of a continuous and routine process, as part of policy advice to Ministers.

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress he hopes to achieve in his Department over the next three months to push forward the declaration signed in October 1994 at the Vienna conference in preparation for the fourth UN conference on women; and if he will agree to incorporate a section on equal opportunities in his Department's annual report. [21448]

**Mrs. Browning:** The Department will continue to ensure that unlawful or unjustifiable discrimination against specific groups of people does not occur as a result of its policies.

The Department's annual report already includes details on equal opportunities with regard to its staff. The Department will continue to include such information in line with central commitments.

## Badgers

**Mr. Jamieson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what support his Department has given since December 1993 *(a)* to the continued monitoring of infection in the wild badger population, *(b)* to research into ways of avoiding transmission of disease from badgers to cattle and *(c)* to co-operation with university departments on proposed studies about the effects of badger removal operations on the badger population and its impact on the subsequent spread of disease within the badger population. [21716]

**Mrs. Browning** *[holding answer 2 May 1995]:* In the financial year 1994–95 the Ministry invested £370,000 in on-going work at the central veterinary laboratory and the central science laboratory on an ecological and epidemiological study of a badger population naturally infected with *M.* bovis in the Gloucestershire study area. A further £138,000 was invested in on-going work to understand the demography and epidemiology of badgers through the production of mathematical models of badger populations to assist in the development of *M.* bovis control strategies. The Ministry also continues to examine the carcases of wild badgers found by members of the public in the vicinity of farms where there have been cattle herd breakdowns for *M.* bovis in addition to those killed in Ministry badger removal operations.

In 1994 the Ministry agreed to fund a project over the next three years, now being carried out by Oxford university in collaboration with the Central Science Laboratory and the Central Veterinary Laboratory, to look at the effects of a badger removal operation by examining the behaviour of surviving badgers, their demography and dynamics, and effects on disease transmission. The Ministry has also just agreed to fund a project over the next three years, to be undertaken by the University of Bristol, to investigate the relationships between badger population density and size of social groups with different habitats, the distribution of *M.* bovis in badgers in south-west England, and the risks of transmitting disease from badgers to cattle.

**Mr. Jamieson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress has been made since December 1993 regarding *(a)* research into the development of effective vaccines for TB in badgers and *(b)* research to develop new or improved diagnostic tests for the presence of infection in cattle and badgers. [21717]

**Mrs. Browning** *[holding answer 2 May 1995]:* In the financial year 1994–95 the Ministry invested £217,000 on the development of a suitable vaccine for the protection of badgers against infection with *M.* bovis. Work on this project started at the Central Veterinary Laboratory in April 1994. Initially, this work has concentrated on understanding the badger's responses to the infection, in order to determine possible mechanisms of protection, and investigating possible vaccine candidates. A feasibility study has been completed and is due to be published in the *Veterinary Record* on 6 May. This work is progressing well although it is anticipated that it will take approximately 15 years to complete.

The Ministry invested £543,000 in financial year 1994–95 in on-going research at the Central Veterinary Laboratory to develop methods for the improved diagnosis of *M.* bovis in cattle and badgers. This work involves the identification and purification of potential diagnostic antigens, the development of appropriate laboratory-based assays of antibody and cellular immunity in infected cattle and improvement of the current skin test reagent. The preliminary results of this work are encouraging.

## Apples

**Mr. Martin Jones:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what is the estimated *(a)* loss of United Kingdom apple orchards, *(b)* cost of grants in the United Kingdom, *(c)* cost of grants across the European Union and *(d)* cost of grants in the Mediterranean European Union nations under the European Union's grubbing-up grant; [21866]

(2) what estimates he has made of the effect of the European Union grubbing-up grants on the United Kingdom's trade balance in *(a)* apples and *(b)* dessert apples. [21857]

**Mr. Jack:** Growers in the EU have applied to grub about 28,000 hectares of apple orchard. In the United Kingdom we have accepted 271 applications into the scheme covering 2,432 hectares. However, it will be some time before we have details of the final outcome of the 1994–95 apple orchard grubbing up grant scheme since acceptance of an application does not necessarily lead to grubbing.

On trade, "English Apples and Pears" says that the 90 per cent. of English apple growers staying in the industry are delighted that a significant reduction in the surplus of European apples is in prospect. They are confident that with the modern orchards planted in recent years they will, in future, be better placed to produce even higher quality apples in the range of varieties the UK consumer wants.

## Chernobyl

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the total compensation paid to farmers for loss of earnings and clean-up of radioactive contamination arising from the fall out from the Chernobyl nuclear accident in 1986. [22027]

**Mr. Jack:** The sheep compensation scheme was introduced in July 1986 to compensate farmers whose enterprises had been disrupted as a result of movement and slaughter restrictions associated with the Chernobyl accident. The total paid out under the scheme in the United Kingdom up to the end of March 1995 was £11,567,729. A table follows, showing the breakdown of payments by country.

*Sheep Compensation Scheme 1986—compensation payments up to 31 March 1995*

| | £ |
|---|---|
| England | 1,313,912 |
| Wales | 7,524,272 |
| Scotland | 2,491,842 |
| Northern Ireland | 237,703 |
| Total | 11,567,729 |

## Agricultural Workers

**Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the total number of *(a)* farmers and *(b)* farm workers for each year since 1988, giving the figures as a percentage of the population for England. [21861]

**Mr. Jack:** The information requested is given in the table.

*Persons engaged in agricultural work on agricultural holdings in England*

| | *Farmers* | | *Farm workers* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Number (000's)* | *As percentage of population* | *Number (000's)* | *As percentage of population* |
| 1988 | 184 | 0.39 | 286 | 0.60 |
| 1989 | 182 | 0.38 | 275 | 0.58 |
| 1990 | 182 | 0.38 | 274 | 0.57 |
| 1991 | 180 | 0.37 | 265 | 0.55 |
| 1992 | 182 | 0.38 | 259 | 0.53 |
| 1993 | 184 | 0.38 | 253 | 0.52 |
| 1994 | 184 | 0.38 | 247 | 0.51 |

*Source:*
Agricultural and Horticultural June census.
*Notes:*
1. Includes estimates for minor holdings.
2. Farmers include principal farmers, and other partners and directors.
3. Farm workers include hired and family workers, managers, seasonal and casuals, and spouses of farmers, partners and directors.
4.1993 population figure for England is an estimate.
5. 1994 population figure for England is a projection based upon mid-1992 data.

## Brucellosis

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many cases of brucellosis have occurred in each year since 1985. [21818]

**Mrs. Browning:** The number of brucellosis cattle herd breakdowns in Great Britain in each year since 1985 from which the organism Brucella abortus was recovered were:

1985: 69
1986: 39
1987: 3
1988: 1

1989: 6

1990: 1

1991: None

1992: None

1993: 1

1994: None

### Foot and Mouth Disease

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many cases of foot and mouth disease occurred in each year since 1978. [22175]

**Mrs. Browning:** There was one outbreak of foot and mouth disease which occurred in 1981 on the Isle of Wight. There have been no outbreaks since then.

### Pleuro-pneumonia

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many cases of pleuro-pneumonia occurred in each year since 1985. [22170]

**Mrs. Browning:** There have been no confirmed cases of pleuro-pneumonia in England since 1898.

### Hygiene Standards

**Mr. Battle:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many prosecutions of dairy farmers in Lancashire for failing to comply with necessary hygiene standards *(a)* have been successfully undertaken and *(b)* are outstanding since 1990. [22272]

**Mrs. Browning** *[holding answer 2 May 1995]:* Responsibility for the enforcement of hygiene standards at dairy farms is split between Agricultural Development Advisory Service, an executive agency of the Ministry and the Welsh Office, and local authority environmental health departments. There have been no prosecutions by ADAS in Lancashire since 1990. Information on prosecutions by environmental health departments is not held centrally.

### Civil Service (Early Retirement)

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the individual value of each *(a)* compulsory early retirement and *(b)* flexible early retirement package received by civil servants leaving his department on grounds of limited efficiency in each of the last five years. [22093]

**Mr. Jack** *[holding answer 2 May 1995]:* Compensation payments for early retirement on grounds of limited efficiency are age, salary and service related. Details of limited efficiency early retirements for each of the last five financial years are as follows:

| | *Annual compensation payment to age 60 (rate pa)* | *Superannuation lump sum* | *Lump sum compensation payment* | *Compensation in lieu of notice (if any)* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *1990–91* | | | | |
| Compulsory | Nil | Nil | Nil | Nil |
| Flexible | Nil | Nil | Nil | Nil |
| *1991–92* | | | | |
| Compulsory | Nil | Nil | Nil | Nil |
| Flexible | Nil | Nil | Nil | Nil |
| *1992–93* | | | | |
| Compulsory | Nil | Nil | Nil | Nil |
| Flexible | 3,607.27 | 9,702.39 | Nil | Nil |
| *1993–94* | | | | |
| Compulsory | Nil | Nil | Nil | Nil |
| Flexible | 4,444.73 | 12,025.30 | Nil | Nil |
| *1994–95* | | | | |
| Compulsory | Nil | Nil | Nil | Nil |
| Flexible | Nil | Nil | Nil | Nil |

## TREASURY

### Fraud

**Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps are being taken to help to combat fraud in the European Union. [20412]

**Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps Her Majesty's Government are taking to combat fraud within the European Union with particular reference to the common agricultural policy and the cohesion budget. [20439]

**Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** I refer to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) on 30 March 1995, *Official Report*, columns *654–55*.

### Hospitality

**Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much was spent on official hospitality by his Department in 1994–95. [21211]

**Mr. Nelson** *[holding answer 1 May 1995]:* In 1994–95, spending on official hospitality by Her Majesty's Treasury was £85,888.

## Market Testing

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the cost of employing consultants in connection with market testing programmes in which his Department has been engaged since their inception. [21379]

**Sir George Young** *[holding answer 1 May 1995]:* The Treasury's estimated cost to date of employing consultants in connection with market testing programmes is as follows:

| | *Support to* | |
|---|---|---|
| | *In House Team* | *Department* |
| | £ | £ |
| 1 April 1992–30 September 1993 | 21,018 | 37,692 |
| 1 October 1993–30 September 1994 | 15,087 | 47,878 |
| 1 October 1994–31 March 1995 | nil | 64,625 |
| Sub totals | 36,105 | 150,195 |

## Conflicts of Interest

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer on how many occasions during the last five years *(a)* civil servants and *(b)* special advisers in his Department or its agencies have declared conflicts of interest; and how many instructions have been issued about their retention, disposal or management. [21400]

**Mr. Nelson** *[holding answer 1 May 1995]:* The information requested is not held centrally.

## Allowances

**Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list for each agency and the central Department for which he is responsible *(a)* the total amount of removal costs and associated expenses reimbursed to officials who were required to relocate as part of their employment, *(b)* the amount of each of the highest three claims that were concluded and settled and *(c)* the average amount of each claim in each of the last three years. [19648]

**Mr. Nelson:** The amounts shown below are in respect of cases which were completed during the past three years. The information is as follows:

*HM Treasury*

| *Year* | £ |
|---|---|
| *(a)* | |
| 1992–93 | No cases concluded and settled. |
| 1993–94 | 244,465.00 |
| 1994–95 | 29,981.00 |
| *(b)* | |
| 1992–93 | No cases concluded and settled. |
| 1993–94 | 49,609.00 |
| | 45,824.00 |
| | 44,311.00 |
| 1994–95 | 27,897.00 |
| | 2,083.00—only two cases during year. |

*HM Treasury*

| *Year* | £ |
|---|---|
| *(c)* | |
| 1992–93 | No cases concluded and settled. |
| 1993–94 | 34,924.00 |
| 1994–95 | 14,991.00 |

*Paymaster*

No costs incurred

*Central Statistical Office*

*(a)* The total amount of removal costs and associated expenses reimbursed to officials who were required to relocate as part of their employment:

1992–93: £138,000.00

1993–94: £166,000.00

1994–95: £180,000.00

*(b)* and *(c)* CSO could provide this information only at disproportionate cost.

*Royal Mint*

*Only one employee fell into the category during the last three years with expenses totalling £32,329.16.*

*Valuation Office*

| | £ |
|---|---|
| *(a)* | |
| 1992–93 | 1,768,000.00 |
| 1993–94 | 1,652,000.00 |
| 1994–95 | 1,001,000.00 |
| *(b)* | |
| 1992–93 | 21,129.00 |
| | 20,054.00 |
| | 19,433.00 |
| 1993–94 | 79,413.00 |
| | 62,479.00 |
| | 32,811.00 |
| 1994–95 | 69,244.00 |
| | 42,125.00 |
| | 25,541.00 |

*(c)* These figures are based on individual claims rather than cases.

1992–93: £3,189.00

1993–94: £2,034.00

1994–95: £1,686.00

## Equal Opportunities

**Ms Corston:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he proposes to take to establish the policies, objectives and measurable targets relating to *(a)* women's economic opportunities and *(b)* women's access to productive resources contained in article 26e of the programme for action agreed at the world summit for social development in Copenhagen. [22269]

**Miss Widdecombe:** I have been asked to reply.

The United Kingdom's report for the United Nations fourth world conference on women, produced in October 1994, details key achievements and priorities for action in a range of areas of particular interest to women. A copy is available in the Library.

## OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

### RMS St. Helena

**Sir David Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will extend the remit of the consultants reviewing the sailing schedule of RMS St. Helena to include all forms of passenger linkage to the island and their potential. [22012]

**Mr. Baldry:** No. The consultants were required to focus on the specific issue of a rescheduling of RMS St. Helena. This is a priority matter for the St. Helena Government because of the early improvement in access to the island which would result. The consultations draft report is currently under consideration.

### Palestine

**Mr. Watson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance the Government will provide to the Palestine National Authority during 1995. [20420]

**Mr. Baldry:** We are committed to providing £82 million over three years from 1994–95 to support the Palestinian Authority and the peace process. This includes contributions through the European Union and other multilateral organisations, notably the United Nations relief and works agency. Our bilateral aid includes a £1.25 million project in support of the Palestinian police and a £5 million know-how programme announced by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in March. Our aid priorities are good government, finance and private enterprise, water, health and education.

## NATIONAL HERITAGE

### Conflicts of Interest

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage on how many occasions during the last five years *(a)* civil servants and *(b)* special advisers in his Department or its agencies have declared conflicts of interest; and how many instructions have been issued about their retention, disposal or management. [21390]

**Mr. Dorrell** *[holding answer 1 May 1995]:* For the Department and agencies for which I am responsible, any conflict of interest involving civil servants will have been dealt with in accordance with established guidance.

My Department has existed for three years. It holds no central records on the number of occasions during that period that career civil servants have declared conflicts of interest.

In the same period, no special advisers in my Department have declared conflicts of interest.

## PRIME MINISTER

### Acts of Union

**Rev. Ian Paisley:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list all the amendments which have been made to the Acts of Union between England and Scotland; and how many of these have affected Scottish law and how many English law; and in what way. [21411]

**The Prime Minister:** The information requested can be obtained by an examination of the official revised edition of the "Statutes in Force" published by HMSO. This shows the Union with Scotland Act 1706, which was passed by the English Parliament, and the Union with England Act 1707, which was passed by the Scottish Parliament, revised to 1 February 1978, together with a note of all the repeals and amendments which have been made to those Acts until then. Cumulative supplements to the "Statutes in Force" were published until February 1991 but no amendments are shown to have been made to those Acts. Since then, information as to any further repeals or amendments to those Acts can be obtained by looking at the "Table on the Effect of Legislation" in part IV of each annual volume of the "Public General Acts", published by HMSO. This has recently been published for 1993 and shows a repeal of article XXII of the Union with Scotland Act 1706.

## EDUCATION

### Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder

**Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what proposals she has to promote the education of children affected by attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder, and if she will make a statement. [20550]

**Mr. Forth:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 24 January 1995, *Official Report*, column *166–67*.

### GNVQ Courses

**Mr. Chidgey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) how many schools and colleges currently offer intermediate and advanced GNVQ courses in *(a)* health and social care, *(b)* leisure and tourism, *(c)* business, *(d)* art and design, *(e)* manufacturing, *(f)* science, *(g)* construction and the build environment, *(h)* hospitality and catering, *(i)* engineering, *(j)* information technology, *(k)* distribution, *(l)* media, communications and production and *(m)* management studies in each county in England and Wales; [21801]

(2) how many schools and colleges currently offer foundation GNVQ courses in *(a)* health and social care, *(b)* leisure and tourism, *(c)* business, *(d)* art and design, *(e)* manufacturing, *(f)* science, *(g)* construction and the built environment, *(h)* hospitality and catering, *(i)* engineering and *(j)* information technology in each county in England and Wales.

**Mr. Boswell:** It will take some time to gather this information. I shall write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

### Initial Teacher Training Report

**Mr. Pickthall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education when she expects to publish the report on school centred initial teacher training and if she will place it in the Library immediately. [22190]

**Mr. Robin Squire:** This is a matter for Her Majesty's chief inspector of schools, who heads the Office for Standards in Education. I have asked Mr. Chris Woodhead to write to the hon. Member.

### Teachers

**Mr. Pickthall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what mechanisms her Department now uses to forecast the numbers of teachers needed over the next decade. [22191]

**Mr. Robin Squire:** The Department's targets for intakes to initial teacher training courses are based on supply and demand models which take account of a range of data, including the number and age of the existing teacher force, movements into and out of teaching, and demographic trends.

**Mr. Pickthall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what are the current figures for unfilled teaching posts. [22192]

**Mr. Robin Squire:** The latest figures for unfilled teaching posts in England—January 1994—are given in the table. Figures for teacher vacancies are not yet available for 1995.

| | *Number of vacancies*[1] | *Vacancies as a percentage of teachers in post* |
|---|---|---|
| Primary/Nursery | 762 | 0.4 |
| Secondary | 624 | 0.4 |
| Total | 1,386 | 0.4 |

[1] Advertised vacancies for full-time permanent appointments (or appointments of at least one term's duration). Includes vacancies being filled on a temporary basis.

**Mr. Pickthall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what over-capacity there currently is in teacher supply. [22193]

**Mr. Robin Squire:** There are currently some 365,000 qualified teachers under 55 in England who are not serving as full-time teachers in maintained nursery, primary or secondary schools.

In terms of future supply, the Teacher Training Agency was advised in November 1994 of the Secretary of State's targets for initial teacher training for 1995–96 to 1997–98. These envisage an 11 per cent. increase in secondary targets over this period, but with a similar reduction in primary targets.

### Mature Students

**Mr. Pickthall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what measures she is taking to assist mature students on teacher education courses who have difficulties with teaching practice arrangements. [22194]

**Mr. Robin Squire:** It is up to higher education institutions to make suitable arrangements for all their students to attend teaching practice. The Department has, however, recently funded the cost of developing a distance-learning postgraduate certificate of education course, run by the Open university, which should help students who have difficulties. My right hon. Friend has also established the Teacher Training Agency with a remit which includes improving the quality and efficiency of all routes into the teaching profession and promoting teaching as a career. One of the TTA's own published aims is to devise a strategy for increasing the diversity of routes into teaching in order to meet the varying needs of prospective teachers, by spring 1996.

### Teachers Pensions Agency

**Mr. Trend:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what key performance targets she has set for the Teachers Pensions Agency in 1995–96. [22923]

**Mr. Robin Squire:** For 1995–96, the key performance targets for the Teachers Pensions Agency are:

a. To achieve an improvement in efficiency of 7.5 per cent. in the use of running cost resources within the agency's control;

b. To process 97 per cent. of the applications for retirement awards by the payable date, or if later, then within 30 days of receipt of the application;

c. To meet the agreed accuracy target for pensions-related calculations;

d. To provide a substantive answer to 95 per cent. of written inquiries within 15 working days of their receipt;

e. To manage the programme agreed with the agency's clients for the collection and processing of service and salary data relating to teachers and to seek timely submission of that data.

### Private Finance

**Mr. Simpson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what initiatives have been undertaken to secure private finance for her Department's projects. [22319]

**Mr. Robin Squire:** The Department does not have direct responsibility for education sector projects. Its role is to encourage the funding bodies, local education authorities and education institutions to take advantage of the private finance opportunities available.

The Department published its booklet, "Education means business", copies of which were placed in the Library. This booklet was sent to all maintained schools, colleges and universities as well as banks, accountancy firms, construction companies and other private sector enterprises that had expressed an interest in PFI.

On 23 March the Department, together with the Higher Education Funding Council for England, hosted a conference at the Queen Elizabeth II conference centre about private finance in higher education. This very successful conference—at which my right hon. Friend gave the key note speech—was attended by representatives of higher education institutions and the private sector.

The Further Education Funding Council is now organising a similar conference for the further education sector in late September. For LEAs, the Department is organising a series of seminars to discuss barriers to private finance and ways by which they might be overcome, and visiting a number of individual authorities. One of the most significant steps that we are taking to secure private finance in the grant-maintained sector is to remove the barrier to commercial borrowing.

In addition to the action that the Department is undertaking, the HEFCE has published its own booklet entitled, "Private Investment in higher education". Copies will be placed in the Library. The FEFC is to publish a booklet about private finance in the further education sector.

**Mr. Simpson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many staff at her Department are employed *(a)* full time and *(b)* part time on projects undertaken to secure private finance for her Department's projects. [22321]

**Mr. Robin Squire:** The Department has a dedicated private finance unit employing six staff on a part-time basis. Staff in the individual higher education, further education and schools policy branches also work on a part-time basis to encourage private finance in their specialist areas and the information branch includes the private finance initiative within its portfolio.

**Mr. Simpson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what percentage of her Department's budget is allocated to initiatives which have been undertaken to secure private finance for her Department's projects. [22320]

**Mr. Robin Squire:** None. The Department does not have direct responsibility for education sector projects. Its role in the private finance initiative is to encourage the funding bodies, LEAs and institutions to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the initiative. The resources required relate mainly to hospitality and travelling and are a tiny percentage of the Department's budget.

For the 1994–95 financial year, about £101,000 was spent on the preparation and printing of the booklet, "Education means business".

### Medical Students

**Mr. Fraser:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education when she next proposes to meet the British Medical Association to discuss the concerns of students in relation to grants for courses in medical training. [22108]

**Mr. Boswell:** My right hon. Friend has no plans to meet the British Medical Association. She is aware of the arguments currently being advanced by the BMA medical students committee, and has corresponded with it about them.

### Information Products

**Mr. Simpson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what has been the total cost of information products produced and distributed by her Department in *(a)* 1994–95, *(b)* 1993–94 and *(c)* 1992–93; and what is her proposed budget for 1995–96. [22322]

**Mr. Forth:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) on 3 April, *Official Report*, column *924*.

**Mr. Simpson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what has been the total cost of information products about grant-maintained status for schools produced and distributed by her Department in *(a)* 1994–95 and *(b)* 1993–94; and what is the proposed budget for 1995–96. [22337]

**Mr. Robin Squire:** The total cost of publications, including videos, about grant-maintained status produced and distributed by the Department for Education was some £380,000 in 1994–95 and some £320,000 in 1993–94. Within the Department's publicity budget for 1995–96, some £200,000 has so far been earmarked for GM products and related expenditure. Additional GM information products may be produced during the course of the financial year, resulting in additional expenditure.

### Equal Opportunities

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what progress she hopes to achieve in her Department over the next three months to push forward the declaration signed in October 1994 at the Vienna conference in preparation for the fourth UN Conference on women; and if she will incorporate a section on equal opportunities in her Department's annual report. [21458]

**Mr. Boswell:** The Government are committed to the principles set out in the regional platform for action agreed at the preparatory conference in Vienna for the fourth UN world conference on women. We have taken these forward through a wide range of programmes and initiatives and will continue to do so. My right hon. Friend will be considering how best to report the Department's action on equal opportunities.

## DEFENCE

### Market Testing

**Mr. Morgan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 25 April, *Official Report*, column *499*, what percentage by value of the total of defence support activities subject to the competing for quality process was *(a)* market tested and *(b)* won by in-house bid between (i) 1 October 1993 to 30 September 1994 and (ii) 10 October 1994 to date. [22382]

**Mr. Freeman:** In the period 1 October 1993 to 30 September 1994, the total value of activities exposed to competing for quality was £287 million. Of the £27 million or 9 per cent. that was market tested, £19 million, or 7 per cent., was won by the in-house bid. In the period since October 1994, the value of activities exposed to competing for quality has totalled £198 million. Of the £7 million, or 4 per cent., which has been market tested, none has been won by the in-house bid.

### Base Closures

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the defence bases that have been closed and sold since 1990 together with the purchasers and the current use where known. [21229]

**Mr. Soames:** The information requested is as follows:

| *Base* | *Purchaser* | *Proposed use at date of sale)* |
|---|---|---|
| *USN Facilities, Holy Loch:* | | |
| 1. Commissary, Queen Street, Dunoon | Dumbarton Co-op Society Ltd. | Supermarket |
| 2. Dolphin Hall, Queen Street, Dunoon | Argyll and Bute District Council | Offices and Library |
| 3. Ardnadam Complex with Pier, Sandbank | Metropolis (Argyll) Ltd. | Sports/leisure complex |
| 4. Families Service Centre | Argyll and Bute District Council | Offices |
| 5. Medical/Dental Centre | Highlands and Islands Enterprise | Offices |

| Base | Purchaser | Proposed use at date of sale) |
|---|---|---|
| 6. Land at Sandbank | Highlands and Islands Enterprise | New Industrial park |
| 7. Supply Depot and Pier | Cowal Leisure Ltd. | Marine/storage use |
| 8. Sailing Club | Holy Loch Sailing Club | Existing use |
| 9. Rankin Complex | Highlands and Islands Enterprise | Site redeveloped—industrial development |
| 10. Gladswood Villa, West Street, Dunoon | H. Forbes | Residential |
| *Inverrary Pier* | I. Turner | Existing use |
| *OFD Invergordon* | | |
| 1. Depot | The Bannerman Company | Transport/storage |
| 2. Tomich Pumphouse | J. C. W. Horlick | Agricultural storage |
| *RNSD Lathalmond* | | |
| 1. Storage Depot | Industrial Estates (Scotland) Ltd. | Industrial Estate |
| 2. Disused rail sidings | J. J. Ritchie and Son | Farmland |
| *Filton Airfield* | British Aerospace | Airfield and associated uses |
| *Primrose Camp, Rosyth, Fife* | The Earl of Elgin | Not known |
| *USN Radio Station, West Murkle, Thurso Bay* | G. C. Walker | Agriculture |
| *Radio Station, Inverkip, Strathclyde* | H. M. S. Stewart | Not known |
| *Winston Barracks, Lanark* | Baxter Bryce Ltd. | Not known |
| *Rosneath:* | | |
| 1. Storage Depot | D. R. M. Bruce | Industrial |
| 2. Dark Wood a) | The Adventure Sailing Trust | Caravan base for sailing club |
| 3. Dark Wood b) | United British Caravan Parks | Additional caravan park |
| 4. Dark Wood c) | P. Henderson | Woodland |
| *Former USN Communications Station, Forss (Lybster)* | Fleet Transport (Aberdeen) | Possible light industrial |
| *Met. Office Site, Shanwell, Tayport* | Finlay | Agriculture |
| *324 Engineer Park, Livingston* | Fife and Kinross Investments Ltd. | Vehicle compound/storage |
| *Former Aerial Site, Hawklaw, Fife* | W. G. S. Innes-Smith | Farm |
| *'St. Lukes', Regimental HQ and Museum* | The Gordon Highlanders | Regimental museum |
| *SEMO Gillingham, Kent* | Medway (Chatham) Dock Company | Specific use not known but related to the purchaser's activities |
| *RAF Chessington, Surrey* | Consortium involving Bryant Homes and Sir Alfred McAlpine | Residential development |
| *HMS St. Vincent (Furze House), London* | Monopro Ltd. | Not known |
| *Burniston Barracks, Scarborough* | Persimmon Homes | Mixed development? |
| *Willems Park, Aldershot* | Tesco plc | Superstore/retail |
| *Bramley, Hants* | Wimpey | Residential |
| *RNAD Milford Haven:* | | |
| 1. Depot | Waterfront Development, Pembroke Ltd. | Residential development |
| 2. Land and Building | Preseli Pembroke District Council | Existing use |
| 3. Land | Gulf Oil Refinery Ltd. | Existing use |
| 4. Farmland | E. Harries | Farm |
| 5. Farmland | L. Philpin | Farm |
| 6. Houses | Various | Existing use |
| *RAF Northcoates, Lincolnshire* | Wessex and Cambrain Estates Ltd. | Business park and airfield |

| Base | Purchaser | Proposed use at date of sale) |
|---|---|---|
| *RAF Ely, Cambridgeshire:* | | |
| 1. 7.26 acres | Department of Health (Lifespan Healthcare Trust) | NHS Hospital |
| 2. 32 acres | Wilcon Homes | Residential development |
| *RAF Orfordness (Site included an area owned by FCO)* | National Trust | Certain areas are now open to the public |
| *RNSM Risley, Cheshire* | Redman Heenan Properties Ltd. | Not known |
| *RAF Jurby Head, Isle of Man* | Bishops Court Investments Ltd. | Finance Company HQ |
| *RAF Bawdsey Manor* | Mr. Toettcher | Language school/college |
| *Ex RN Repair Depot, Fareham* | Truryn Leisure | Residential |
| *RN Boom Defence Depot, Swanmore, Southampton* | The Hayward Partnership | Storage |
| *Jellalabad Barracks, Taunton* | New Properties Frontiers | Residential |
| *Mount Wise West, Plymouth* | Plymouth Development Corporation | Commercial use |
| *Royal William Yard, Plymouth* | Plymouth Development Corporation | Commercial use |
| *Mountbatten, Plymouth* | Plymouth Development Corporation | Commercial use |
| *Old Infirmary, Plymouth* | Plymouth Development Corporation | Not known |
| *Connaught Barracks, Woolwich* | MR Pankhania Westcome Home Improvement Ltd. | Commercial/development site |
| *Postal and Courier Depot, Whetstone* | Fairview Homes | Residential development site |
| *HMS Mercury, Petersfield* | Arundel Estates | Conversion to flats and housing applied for |
| *Peninsula Barracks, Winchester* | Arundel Estates | Residential |
| *RM Eastney:* | | |
| 1. Eastney Barracks | Truryn Leisure | Residential |
| 2. RM Club | Trustees of RM Club | RM Club |
| 3. Eastney Fort East | Hampshire Country Council | Museum |
| 4. North Wing Former Officers' Mess | Hampshire County Council | Museum |

It is my Department's practice not to record the use of a site once it has been sold, so the proposed use at the time of disposal is shown on the list.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

### European Regional Development Fund

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his answer of 14 December, *Official Report*, column *692*, if he will list those projects in privatised companies which have received European regional development funding since privatisation indicating *(a)* the level of funding and *(b)* the dates when it was received. [20577]

**Sir John Wheeler:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him on 1 May by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary for Industry and Energy, *Official Report*, column *14*.

### Equal Opportunities

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress he hopes to achieve in his Department over the next three months to push forward the declaration signed in October 1994 at the Vienna conference in preparation for the fourth UN conference on women; and if he will agree to incorporate a section on equal opportunities in his Department's annual report. [21478]

**Mr. Ancram:** The Government are committed to the principles set out in the regional platform for action agreed at the preparatory conference in Vienna for the fourth UN world conference on women. We have taken these forward through a wide range of programmes and initiatives and will continue to do so.

Progress on equal opportunity matters in relation to staff in the Northern Ireland civil service will continue to be reported in detail in the regular published reports produced by the service's equal opportunities unit.

### Agricultural Workers

**Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total number of *(a)* farmers and *(b)* farm workers for each year since 1988, giving the

figures as a percentage of the total population for Northern Ireland. [21860]

**Mr Ancram:** The information is given in the table:

| | Farmers | | Other farm workers | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Year | Persons | Per cent. of total population | Persons | Per cent. of total population |
| 1988 | 37,417 | 2.4 | 24,638 | 1.6 |
| 1989 | 36,709 | 2.3 | 24,987 | 1.6 |
| 1990 | 36,302 | 2.3 | 24,733 | 1.6 |
| 1991 | 35,991 | 2.2 | 23,821 | 1.5 |
| 1992 | 36,224 | 2.2 | 22,905 | 1.4 |
| 1993 | 34,408 | 2.1 | 25,216 | 1.5 |
| 1994 | 35,377 | 2.2 | 24,230 | 1.5 |

**Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many suicides occurred among *(a)* farmers, *(b)* farm workers and *(c)* the general population in each year since 1988. [21908]

**Sir John Wheeler:** The number of deaths registered as suicides in Northern Ireland in each year since 1988 are set out in the table. Deaths are recorded according to date of registration and not by date of occurrence.

| Year | Farmers | Farm workers | General population |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1988 | 10 | 2 | 153 |
| 1989 | 1 | 1 | 116 |
| 1990 | 3 | 0 | 158 |
| 1991 | 8 | 0 | 129 |
| 1992 | 2 | 1 | 107 |
| 1993 | 9 | 1 | 129 |
| 1994[1] | 5 | 1 | 95 |

[1]to 30 September 1994

### Government Reform

**Mr. William Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his answer of 27 March, *Official Report*, column *482*, on what date a copy of the proposed financial arrangements referred to was placed in the Library. [22209]

**Mr. Ancram:** A copy of the financial arrangements was placed in the Library on 27 March.

## SOCIAL SECURITY

### Equal Opportunities

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what progress has been made within his Department on equal opportunities matters. [21507]

**Mr. Burt:** The Department is committed to equality of opportunity for its staff. Recent examples of progress include the continued improvement in the representation of women and ethnic minorities at management grades across the Department and the increased use of flexible working patterns. For example, 15 per cent. of staff now work part-time. Other initiatives to help staff balance home and work commitments include career breaks, alternative working patterns and special leave arrangements. The Department employs over 1,500 registered disabled staff and information gathered from staff surveys indicates that there are as many non-registered disabled staff. Harassment counselling networks are in place across the Department and equal opportunities awareness training is widely available.

A range of subsidised child care facilities are provided for staff, including 646 nursery places, 2,560 holiday playscheme places and child care referral services.

The Department was an early member of Opportunity 2000 and remains committed to the Cabinet Office programmes for action on women and race and the new programme for action on disability.

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish the gender assessment being prepared by his Department. [21508]

**Mr. Burt:** This Department's policy, in line with guidance issued in 1992 by the ministerial group on women's issues, is that policy proposals should ensure that unlawful or unjustifiable sex or race discrimination does not occur and that similar principles apply to other groups such as people with disabilities and older people. This scrutiny is part of a continuous and routine process, as part of policy advice to Ministers.

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security which Minister in his Department has responsibility for equal opportunities issues. [21506]

**Mr. Burt:** I have.

### Income Support

**Mr. Alan Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the annual cost of providing income support to spouses of people who are in local authority residential and nursing home care. [22282]

**Mr. Roger Evans:** The information is not available.

### Widow's Payment

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to uprate the value of the widow's payment. [22224]

**Mr. Arbuthnot:** I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 10 January, *Official Report*, columns *56–57*.

## HEALTH

### Health Policy

**Mr. Nicholas Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action is being taken by her Department to meet the target set by the World Health Organisation European region in terms of reduction of differences in health status between different groups within countries; and if she will make a statement. [21054]

**Mr. Sackville:** Our "The Health of the Nation" strategy brings together all Government Departments to work to improve health among all groups. Health services in each part of the country are funded according to assessed health need and the national health service reforms mean that health authorities and general practitioners are able to take action locally to address the needs in their area. I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 23 March, *Official Report*, column *353–54*.

**Mr. Nicholas Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on progress towards meeting the target set by the World Health Organisation European region in respect of reducing the differences in health status between different groups within countries. [21055]

**Mr. Sackville:** Our "The Health of the Nation" key targets are the primary measures against which we monitor progress on reducing avoidable illness and death, and risky behaviour affecting health, across the whole population. "The Health of the Nation" identifies different groups at particular risk and efforts are concentrated on those groups. Progress was reported in "One Year On" and there will be a further report later this year.

**Mr. Nicholas Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to include among the "The Health of the Nation" targets, the target set by the World Health Organisation European region in respect of reducing the differences in health status between different groups within countries. [21056]

**Mr. Sackville:** Meeting the targets already set in "The Health of the Nation" by focusing efforts on groups particularly at risk should help to reduce variations in health status between different groups.

The new national health service enables health authorities and general practitioners to take action locally to address needs in their area and a considerable amount of work is being done to achieve improvements.

I therefore have no plans to include the World Health Organisation European region target in "The Health of the Nation" targets.

### Press Offices

**Mrs. Beckett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the budget of the press office in *(a)* the Department of Health and *(b)* the national health service executive in each of the last five years. [21747]

**Mr. Sackville:** The national health service executive does not have a separate press office. The budget for the press office is not separately identifiable from the Department's information division.

### Press Officers

**Mrs. Beckett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many press and public relations officers have been employed by *(a)* the Department of Health, *(b)* the national health service executive *(c)* regional health authorities *(d)* district health authorities and *(e)* trusts in each of the last five years. [21746]

**Mr. Sackville:** Functions which are commonly associated with press and public relations for the Department of Health are carried out by the Department's information division. The number of staff employed in each of the last five years is:

1990–91: 37
1991–92: 36
1992–93: 39
1993–94: 39
1994–95: 37

Information about the number of press and public relations officers in regional health authorities, district health authorities, family health services authorities and national health service trusts is not available centrally.

### NHS Reforms

**Mrs. Beckett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is her assessment of the effect of the introduction of GP fundholding on the need for administration within the NHS; [21750]

(2) what is her assessment of the effect of the introduction of the internal market on the need for administration within the NHS. [21749]

**Mr. Malone:** The national health service reforms have strengthened the management of the NHS and have led to a rise in activity, a fall in waiting times and a rise in consumer satisfaction.

### GP Prescribing Costs

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much money is to be made available to family health service authorities to enable them to make payments to general practitioners' practices which contain their prescribing costs. [21667]

**Mr. Malone:** We made £1.7 million available to health authorities to meet the cost of payments to non-fundholding general practitioner practices in respect of prescribing incentive schemes which operated in 1993–94. These payments, which are directly related to the reduction in prescribing expenditure achieved, are used to improve patient services.

### Community Nursing

**Ms Jowell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the amount spent per head of the population on community nursing in London, Newcastle, Birmingham, Manchester and Liverpool in each year since 1990. [21917]

**Mr. Sackville:** Information is not available in the form requested.

### Contracting Out

**Ms Jowell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what financial criteria her Department applies in the contracting out of services previously provided in-house. [21925]

**Mr. Sackville:** Financial criteria are applied and evaluated as an integral part of all major procurement, regardless of whether the services were previously provided in-house, in accordance with best professional purchasing practice and existing legislation. The purpose of this procedure is to minimise the risk to the Department of the financial failure of a supplier.

### Nurses

**Mr. Spellar:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the latest figures for unemployment among nurses. [22009]

**Mr. Sackville:** This information is not available centrally.

### Special Hospitals

**Ms Jowell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients are currently awaiting admission to and discharge from *(a)* Broadmoor, *(b)* Rampton and *(c)* Ashworth hospitals. [21921]

**Mr. Bowis:** This information is not available centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of the Special Hospitals Service Authority, which is responsible for the management of the special hospitals.

### Accident and Emergency Departments

**Ms Jowell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many 24-hour accident and emergency departments there were in London in *(a)* 1980, *(b)* 1985, *(c)* 1990 and *(d)* 1994. [21919]

**Mr. Sackville:** Information on 24-hour accident and emergency services was first collected in 1987–88. Until 1991–92, data were collected at hospital level, but for subsequent years they were collected on the basis of national health service trusts and directly managed units, some of which may provide accident and emergency services on more than one site. The information available is shown in the table. Comparable information for earlier years is not available.

*Trusts[1] and Directly Managed Units with Accident and Emergency Departments[2] London.*

| *Year* | *Number* |
|---|---|
| 1991–92 | 41 |
| 1992–93 | 37 |
| 1993–94 | 34 |

[1] A trust or a directly managed unit may consist of a number of hospitals providing an A&E service on more than one site.
[2] With medical staff on site and where the intention is to open 168 hours per week.
*Source:* KH09

### Primary Care

**Mrs. Beckett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 23 February, *Official Report*, column *323*, how much of the expenditure per head of population on primary care is demand driven and how much allocated by formula; and if she will make a statement. [21927]

**Mr. Sackville:** Primary care consists of all four branches of the family health services—the general medical, dental and ophthalmic services and the pharmaceutical service, together with the community health services. The cost of various elements of these services is met by family health services authorities, the Dental Practice Board and health authorities. The family health services form by far the largest part, and are mostly demand-led apart from the costs associated with the direct reimbursement of certain general practitioner practice expenses and the drugs cost and practice expenses' elements of the budgets managed by GP fundholders. Expenditure on community health services is funded locally by health authorities but is not separately identifiable in data available centrally. It is not possible, therefore, to give a precise apportionment of the overall expenditure on primary care services between the demand-led and cash-limited elements, nor to calculate the proportion allocated by formula, although this would be small.

### Weighted Capitations (Health Authorities)

**Sir Terence Higgins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the five most underfunded health authorities in England and the extent to which they are currently below capitation and the corresponding data for the previous 10 years. [21807]

**Mr. Sackville:** The weighted capitation positions for the five district health authorities furthest below target in 1993–94, 1994–95 and 1995–96 are listed. Corresponding information for previous years is not available centrally.

*Weighted capitation positions for five health authorities furthest below target*

| *District* | *£ million* | *Percentage* |
|---|---|---|
| *1993–94 distance from target* | | |
| Worthing | 14.8 | –15.7 |
| Chichester | 9.0 | –13.5 |
| Oldham | 8.9 | –9.7 |
| Canterbury and Thanet | 10.2 | –9.0 |
| Southport | 4.0 | –8.9 |
| *1994–95 distance from target* | | |
| Worthing | 10.1 | –10.2 |
| Blackpool | 11.4 | –8.7 |
| Chichester | 5.9 | –8.4 |
| Wigan | 8.6 | –7.7 |
| Hereford | 3.9 | –6.3 |
| *1995–96 distance from target* | | |
| Worthing[1] | 15.7 | –13.0 |
| South Essex | 27.1 | –9.0 |
| Chichester[1] | 6.6 | –7.9 |
| Bedfordshire | 17.9 | –7.5 |
| East Sussex | 22.1 | –6.4 |

[1] Figures for 1995–96 were calculated prior to the subsequent merger of Worthing DHA and Chichester DHA with Mid Downs DHA to form West Sussex DHA as of 1 April 1995.
*Notes:*
1. Data are not necessarily comparable year on year or across boundaries within year because of differing regional policies eg. on the integration of capital charges, levels of top slicing and boundary changes.
2. For 1994–95 and 1995–96 the distance from targets have been calculated on a standardised basis which assumes all RHAs are at their capitation targets. They may therefore vary from locally published figures.

### Medium Secure Units

**Ms Tessa Jowell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients were detained in medium secure units run by the NHS for each year since 1991. [21918]

**Mr. Bowis:** The number of places in purpose-built national health service medium secure units has increased from 597 in January 1991 to 792 in April 1995. The completion of our centrally funded building programme, to which we allocated more than £47 million between 1991 and 1995, will take this to over 1,150 places by the end of 1996. Further places are being developed by regions from the mainstream NHS capital programme.

The numbers of in-patients receiving treatment in these units, not all of whom will necessarily have been detained, were:

| | *Number* |
|---|---|
| 31 January 1991 | 492 |
| 31 January 1992 | 532 |
| 31 January 1993 | 591 |
| 31 March 1994 | 653 |

*Source:*
Department of Health annual census of NHS medium secure units

In addition, a number of patients were receiving treatment in NHS interim secure units, which in many cases are of medium secure standard, and as NHS patients in private sector medium secure units.

### Continuing Care Beds (London)

**Ms Jowell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many continuing care beds there were in London in *(a)* 1980, *(b)* 1985, *(c)* 1990 and *(d)* 1994. [21920]

**Mr. Bowis:** Information available centrally on numbers of national health service beds does not include the classification "continuing care". Information according to ward classifications has been published for the years since 1988–89 in "Bed availability for England". In earlier years, beds were classified according to consultant specialty and "SH3 National and Regional Summaries" were published. Copies of the publications are available in the Library.

### Psychiatric Units (London)

**Ms Jowell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she is taking to reduce bed occupancy in psychiatric units in inner London; and if she will make a statement. [21924]

**Mr. Bowis:** It is for district health authorities to assess the mental health needs of their local population and to purchase services to meet those needs. In recognition of the pressures on mental health services in inner London we commissioned the mental health task force London project to work with the London health authorities, local authorities and other agencies to identify key problems and to develop action plans to address these. The mental health task force London project follow-up report, published on 19 April, copies of which are available in the Library, shows that health authorities have got off to a good start in implementing their action plans to improve London's mental health services. The regional offices of the national health service executive will continue to monitor progress closely.

### Marriages

**Dr. Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many marriages between British citizens and non-British, non-EU citizens were reported as bogus to the Secretary of State for the Home Department by the Registrar General in each year since 1989. [21817]

**Mr. Sackville:** Details of the total number of marriages suspected to have been arranged for the sole purpose of evading statutory immigration controls, reported by the Registrar General to the Home Department, since 1989 are shown. Details of the reports sent involving a marriage between British citizens and non-British citizens are not kept separately and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

The number of marriages reported by the Registrar General to the Home Office were

1989: Nil
1990: Nil
1991: 19
1992: 94
1993: 304
1994: 404
1995[1]: 90

[1] Relates to the first quarter only

### Hospital Development Schemes

**Mr. Simpson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hospital development schemes were started in *(a)* 1994–95, *(b)* 1993–94 *(c)* 1992–93; and how many are planned to be started in (i) 1995–96 and (ii) 1996–97. [22323]

**Mr. Sackville:** Information is available on all national health service building schemes, most of which are on hospital sites, with a works cost exceeding £1 million as follows:

| *Year* | *Development started* |
|---|---|
| 1992–93 | 85 |
| 1993–94 | 79 |
| 1994–95 | 94 |

To date, 97 schemes have been approved with expenditure programmed in 1995–96 and 1996–97.

### Medical Devices Agency

**Mr. Nigel Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish the key targets for 1995–96 for the Medical Devices Agency. [27728]

**Mr. Sackville:** I have agreed the agency's key targets for 1995–96, and have placed copies in the Library.

### Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder

**Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures she proposes to assist those suffering from attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder and their carers; and if she will make a statement. [20549]

**Mr. Bowis:** The Department recently issued a handbook on child and adolescent mental health, copies of which are available in the Library. This gives information about the prevalence of this disorder. Hyperkinetic disorder is among those mainly childhood disorders which authorities responsible for purchasing mental health services should recognise and provide for in their purchasing plans. We also support the work of voluntary organisations concerned with this disorder, including provision of grant aid to the hyperactive children's support group.

### Children's Homes

**Ms Coffey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the current study into unregisterable children's homes will be completed; and what will be the date of publication. [21940]

**Mr. Bowis:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave her on 24 January, *Official Report*, column *175*.

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

### Nuclear Weapons

14. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the nuclear non-proliferation conference. [20431]

24. **Mr. Gapes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Britain's policy towards the nuclear non-proliferation treaty. [20443]

**Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the progress of the non-proliferation treaty conference in New York. [20444]

**Mr. Hurd:** I refer the hon. Members to my answer to the question from the hon. Member for Mid Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant).

### China

21. **Mr. Soley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to visit China to discuss human rights. [20440]

**Mr. Goodlad:** My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has no plans at present to visit China. He raised human rights when he met the Chinese Foreign Minister in New York on 18 April.

### EU Directives

22. **Mr. Rathbone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Britain's record of compliance with European Union directives by reference to those of other European Union member states. [20441]

**Mr. David Davis:** The United Kingdom has a good record on compliance with EU directives. The latest figures show that the UK has implemented 92.3 per cent. of directives in force. This is the third best total among member states. The latest Commission report, containing figures for all member states, has been placed in the House Library.

### India

26. **Mr. Congdon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps his Department is taking to improve co-operation between the United Kingdom and India, with particular reference to science and technology. [20445]

**Mr. Baldry:** Within the context of the highly successful Indo-British partnership initiative, my Department is co-ordinating an initiative designed to further strengthen science and technology co-operation particularly in those areas which have a commercial dimension. These activities will include a science and technology exchange scheme, an industry-funded postgraduate scholarship programme and a technician training exchange. In November my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster plans to visit India accompanied by a delegation to demonstrate British strengths in science, engineering and technology.

30. **Ms Gordon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about the abuse of human rights in Madhya Pradesh, India, in relation to the work of wives and children of bonded labourers; and if he will make a statement. [20450]

**Mr. Baldry:** We have very little information on this subject. The Indian Government's policy is to liberate and rehabilitate all bonded labourers, but progress is slow. We have asked our high commission to try to establish more details and will report further in due course.

### Bosnia

27. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the progress of efforts to find a peaceful solution to the crisis in Bosnia. [20446]

**Mr. Hurd:** The Croatian offensive in West Slavonia and the refusal of the parties in Bosnia to extend the cessation of hostilities agreement have seriously increased tensions in the region. We urge all parties to show restraint and co-operate fully with the UN to prevent escalation. These developments underline the urgency of progress in the political process. The contact group is continuing its efforts to promote mutual recognition between the states of the former Yugoslavia and secure a resumption of negotiations on Bosnia on the basis of the contact group plan. Further meetings of contact group officials are being held this week.

### Intergovernmental Conference

28. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next plans to meet his European Union counterparts in preparation for the 1996 intergovernmental conference. [20448]

**Mr. David Davis:** The first meeting of the study group is on 2 June in Messina.

### Export Promotion

29. **Mr. Thomason:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what priority he attaches to export promotion in setting his Department's overall objectives. [20449]

**Mr. Goodlad:** Promoting trade is recognised by my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary as one of the FCO's key long-term objectives.

Commercial work is our posts' largest single activity, accounting for 30 per cent. of front-line staff. They offer a wide range of commercial services for exporters. But there is no clear dividing line between export promotion and many of our posts' other activities. For instance ambassadors provide British companies with high-quality political and economic advice as well as invaluable door opening.

### Gibraltar

**Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action is being taken to improve the flow of people and traffic between Spain and Gibraltar following the introduction of the Schengen agreement on EU external frontiers. [20426]

**Mr. David Davis:** When I met my Spanish opposite number, Mr. Westendorp, on 19 April, I made clear our concern about the unacceptable delays at the Spain-Gibraltar frontier.

Our ambassador in Madrid has also formally protested to the Spanish Government. We have left the Spanish Government in no doubt that we will not accept the implementation of the Schengen convention as an excuse for frontier delays.

It is up to the Schengen countries to provide adequate staff at their frontier posts with other EU countries to prevent any undue delay to EU citizens.

We have also reminded the Spanish Government that the Schengen external frontier is not equivalent to the EU's external frontier. Gibraltar is an integral part of the European Union and must be treated as such.

### Malta

**Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current position of Malta's application to join the EC.

**Mr. David Davis:** The 10 April Foreign Affairs Council outlined the circumstances in which accession negotiations will begin six months after conclusion of the intergovernmental conference.

### Poland

**Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he is taking to support the application of Poland to join the European Union; and if he will make a statement. [20932]

**Mr. David Davis:** We strongly support the eastward enlargement of the European Union to those associated countries of central Europe which wish to join, including Poland. To help them prepare for membership, the EU agreed a strategy at the Essen European Council in December 1994 which we welcomed. The United Kingdom is working to ensure the strategy's effective implementation.

### Taslima Nasrin

**Ms Jowell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Bangladeshi Government and the Bangladeshi high commissioner regarding the case of Taslima Nasrin; and if he will make a statement. [21027]

**Mr. Baldry:** In the last few months, we, and our EU partners, have been in close contact with the Bangladeshi authorities on the case of Taslima Nasrin. In January, I discussed it with their Foreign Minister during my visit to Bangladesh.

### Pakistan

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations on behalf of Her Majesty's Government he has made to the Government of Pakistan over the murder on 16 April of Iqbal Masih; and if he will make a statement. [22384]

**Mr. Baldry:** I have made no representations to the Government of Pakistan. We deplore the murder of Iqbal Masih and hope the Pakistan authorities will be able swiftly to identify and bring to justice those responsible.

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to which British post in Pakistan Iqbal Masih applied for a visa to visit the United Kingdom; when his application was received; when it was referred to London; if the application was granted; when Iqbal Masih was informed of the decision; and if he will make a statement. [22386]

**Mr. Baldry:** We do not normally disclose details of an individual's entry clearance application to third parties without the applicant's consent. However, in this case I can say that Mr. Iqbal Masih applied for a United Kingdom visa in Stockholm on 11 November 1994.

The application was referred to Islamabad in line with normal practice. Before a reply was received from Islamabad, Mr. Masih returned to Pakistan.

### Azad Kashmir

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received as to when the Government of Azad Kashmir will introduce an ordinance whereby those held in prison without trial for more than two years will be eligible for bail. [22385]

**Mr. Baldry:** We have received no recent reports.

### Arms Sales

**Mr. Miller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those countries to which Her Majesty's Government refuse to sell arms, in each case giving the criteria for the embargo.

**Mr. David Davis:** We observe mandatory United Nations embargoes on Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Liberia, Former Republic of Yugoslavia, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) UNITA (Angola) and Rwanda; European Union embargoes on China, Burma, Zaire and Sudan; an Organisation on Security and Co-operation in Europe embargo on Armenia and Azerbaijan.

In addition we do not supply military equipment to Argentina or Iran.

We also observe the EU policy of applying a presumption of denial for new export licence applications for defence equipment for Nigeria, and the UN policy of encouraging a reduction in military expenditure by Cyprus.

### Land-mines

**Mr. Merchant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the United Kingdom's policy on the export of land-mines.

**Mr. David Davis:** On 15 March I extended the scope of our indefinite moratorium on the export of anti-personnel land-mines. It now comprises a total ban on the export of non self-destructing or non-detectable anti-personnel land-mines; plus a ban on the export of all anti-personnel land-mines to countries which have not ratified the weaponry convention.

On 10 April the Foreign Affairs Council agreed a proposal for joint action on land-mines. The joint action includes an European Union-wide moratorium on the export of anti-personnel land-mines, identical in scope to our own moratorium; joint efforts to strengthen the UN weaponry convention; and support for demining.

### EU Directives

**Mr. Whittingdale:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the record of *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* other members states in complying with EU directives. [20416]

**Mr. David Davis:** The United Kingdom has a good record on compliance with EU directives. The latest figures show that the United Kingdom has implemented

92.3 per cent. of directives in force. This is the third best total among member states. The latest Commission report, containing figures for all member states, has been placed in the House Library.

### UN Arms Register

**Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the United Kingdom has *(a)* completed and *(b)* submitted its 1994 return to the United Nations register of conventional arms; if he will place a copy of return in the Library; and if he will list the other states that have submitted their returns. [22317]

**Mr. David Davis:** The United Kingdom 1994 entry in the United Nations register of conventional arms was submitted to the United Nations on 1 May 1995. Arrangements have been made for copies of the return to be placed in the Library.

It is too early to say which other states have submitted returns at this stage.

### Overseas Students

**Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many scholarships are available to overseas students for higher education and training in the United Kingdom. [22148]

**Mr. Baldry:** We have for many years funded substantial programmes of scholarships and awards to enable overseas students to study and train in the United Kingdom.

In 1993–94, the latest year for which complete figures are available, we provided some 21,000 scholarships and awards at a total cost of about £150 million.

### Islamabad

**Mr. Waller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to improve access for disabled persons to the visa interview section at Islamabad. [22340]

**Mr. Goodlad:** I have asked the high commission at Islamabad for details and shall arrange for my hon. Friend to receive a substantive reply as soon as possible.

### British Council

**Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the total expenditure by the British Council for *(a)* the interchange of people, *(b)* libraries and the purchasing of books and *(c)* the supply of specialist training in the fields of engineering, science and education for the years 1992 and 1994. [22146]

**Mr. Baldry:** Expenditure in financial years 1992–93 and 1994–95 was (in £m):

| | *1992–93* | *1994–95* |
|---|---|---|
| *(a)* Interchange of people | 204 | 200 |
| *(b)* Libraries and the purchasing of books | 49 | 59 |
| *(c)* Supply of specialist training in the fields of engineering, science and education | 65 | 77 |

## SCOTLAND

### School Buses

**Mr. McMaster:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to introduce legislation to make safety seat belts compulsory on school buses; and if he will make a statement

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton** *[holding answer 26 April 1995]:* The Government are presently consulting on draft regulations which will require seat belts to be fitted to all coaches and minibuses whenever they are used specifically for the transport of children. It is proposed that the regulations will come into force 12 months after they are laid before Parliament to allow operators sufficient time to arrange for vehicles to be fitted with seat belts. The regulations will be made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport and will extend to Scotland.

### Animal Diseases

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many cases of Teschen disease occurred in each year since 1975. [21097]

**Sir Hector Monro:** No cases of Teschen disease have been recorded in Scotland since 1975.

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many cases of African swine fever there has been each year since 1985. [21066]

**Sir Hector Monro:** No cases of African swine fever have been recorded in Scotland since 1985.

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many cases of vesicular stomatitis occurred in each year since 1985. [21137]

**Sir Hector Monro:** No cases of vesicular stomatitis have been reported since it was made notifiable on 1 June 1991. Official records are not available for the period before that date.

### Mink Farms

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the number of licensed mink farms in each year since 1989. [21192]

**Sir Hector Monro** *[holding answer 1 May 1995]:* The number of licensed mink farms in each year since 1989 is as follows:

1989: 8
1990: 6
1991: 2
1992: 2
1993: 1
1994: —

### Scottish Environment Protection Agency

**Mr. Raymond S. Robertson:** To ask the Secretary for Scotland what plans he has to recruit a chief executive and members for the Scottish Environment Protection Agency and what costs may be associated with this exercise. [22729]

**Mr. Lang:** As the Environment Bill has received a Second Reading in the Commons, thereby indicating parliamentary support for the principle of the Bill, advertisements are being placed in the press for a chief

executive and members of the Scottish Environment Protection Agency. The successful candidates will not be formally appointed until the Bill has received Royal Assent.

Parliamentary approval for the new service will be sought in a summer supplementary estimate for the housing and environmental services, Scotland vote, class XIV, vote 5. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at £40,000 will be met by a repayable advance from the contingencies fund.

This expenditure is urgent because of the need to have senior personnel in place as soon as possible after Royal Assent so as to ensure that the agency is full operational from 1 April 1996.

## HOUSE OF COMMONS

### Children's Books

**Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick upon Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, what was the cost of the children's books in the Family Room of the House; who chose them; and under what budget their purchase was made.

**Mr. Beith** *[holding answer 24 April 1995]:* In July 1989, the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee of the Services Committee gave approval to the idea that a small set of bookcases be provided to house children's books in the Members' Families' Room. The Services Committee and the Speaker endorsed this recommendation of the Sub-Committee. The then Librarian, Dr. Menhennet, agreed to find up to £150 from the Library's budget to purchase a modest number of suitable books which would be stamped as Library property. The assistant education officer was asked to advise on the selection of books. Early in 1994, an additional £30 was spent following a suggestion from a Member.

## WALES

### NRA Advisory Committee for Wales

**Mr. Sweeney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what issues his Advisory Committee for Wales on National Rivers Authority functions has considered during 1994. [22779]

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** The committee's annual report for 1994 has been published today and I will arrange for copies to be placed in the Libraries of the House.

### Divorces

**Mr. Martin Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many cases of divorce have been reported during the last year; and what were the comparable figures for each of the previous four years. [20752]

**Mr. Richards:** The information requested for Wales is in the following table.

| *Year* | *Divorces*[1] |
|---|---|
| 1994[2] | 7,941 |
| 1993 | 8,517 |
| 1992 | 8,633 |
| 1991 | 8,542 |
| 1990 | 8,159 |

*Notes:*
[1] Divorces according to the date of decree absolute.
[2] The 1994 figure is provisional and is liable to revision to take account of late amendments.
*Source:*
Lord Chancellors Department.

### Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder

**Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment his Department has made of the prevalence of attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder in Wales and in each health authority; what measures he proposes to assist sufferers and their carers; and if he will make a statement. [20548]

**Mr. Richards:** The determination of the level of need and the provision of appropriate services is a matter for health authorities.

### CADW

**Mr. Sweeney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what targets he has set for Cadw: Welsh Historic Monuments executive agency. [22778]

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** Cadw has been set the following key targets for 1995–96:

(i) To complete 90 per cent. of the approved conservation maintenance programme.
(ii) To complete 60 resurvey lists.
(iii) To resolve 75 per cent. of ad hoc listing cases within 17 weeks.
(iv) To complete 110 scheduling actions, of which at least 70 per cent. involve additional protection.
(v) To resolve 75 per cent. of listed building consent cases within four weeks, and 90 per cent. of cases within six weeks.
(vi) To resolve 75 per cent. of scheduled monument consent cases within 13 weeks, and 90 per cent. of cases within 17 weeks.
(vii) To resolve 80 per cent. of Historic Buildings grant applications within 17 weeks.
(viii) To resolve 80 per cent. of Ancient Monument grant applications within six weeks.
(ix) To pay 90 per cent. of properly presented claims for Historic Buildings and Ancient Monument grants within four weeks of receipt.
(x) To achieve a market share of 63 per cent. of the number of visitors to the top 20 heritage sites in Wales.
(xi) To increase the average income per visitor to 227.
(xii) To operate within allocated programme and running cost budgets.
(xiii) To achieve efficiency gains of at least 2 per cent.

Full details of Cadw's performance against its targets for 1995–96 will be published in the agency's annual report.

# Written Answers to Questions

*Thursday 4 May 1995*

## TRANSPORT

### Rail Franchises

**Ms Glenda Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the foreign national rail companies which are free to submit a bid to operate rail franchises in the United Kingdom. [22589]

**Mr. Watts:** There are no restrictions preventing foreign national rail companies bidding for franchises.

### Railtrack

**Ms Glenda Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what budget his Department has allocated for advertising and promoting the sale of Railtrack plc. [22590]

**Mr. Watts:** Costs of the sale will be published in due course.

### Railways (Capital Expenditure)

**Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his estimate of the total capital expenditure on British railways, including rolling stock, in 1994–95. [22444]

**Mr. Watts:** Capital expenditure on British railways, including expenditure on European Passenger Services Ltd., is expected to be over £1 billion in 1994–95.

### The Minch (Vessel Traffic)

**Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what steps have been taken to monitor the traffic of vessels in the Minch since publication of the Donaldson report; and if he will make a statement; [21420]

(2) what assessment he has made of the number of large vessels currently using the deep water route in preference to the Minch. [21421]

**Mr. Norris:** These are operational matters for the Marine Safety Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

*Letter from R. M Bradley to Mr. Robert Maclennan, dated 4 May 1995:*

The Secretary of State for Transport has asked me to reply to your Questions about monitoring tanker traffic in the Minch.

In the light of the BRAER grounding in January 1993, the International Maritime Organisation adopted a number of ship routeing and reporting recommendations for areas around the United Kingdom coast, all of which entered into force in late November of that year. Laden tankers over 10,000grt are recommended to use the Deep Water Route to the west of the Hebrides rather than the Minch, except in times of adverse weather, when using the sheltered waters of the Minch is a safer option for the ship and the marine environment. At the same time, all tankers intending to use the minch should report their movements to the HM Coastguard station at Stornoway.

This Agency has systematically analysed those ship movement reports to check for infringements of the international routeing recommendation. From January 1994 to March 1995 the Agency analysed reports from 814 ships, 603 of which were tankers. Of those tankers, 203 were laden and 53 of those were over 10,000grt. In only one case—in January 1994—was the routeing recommendation for the Minch infringed. The Agency took immediate action with the owners.

Lord Donaldson's report into measures to prevent pollution from merchant ships welcomed the Agency's monitoring of tanker traffic in the Minch and supported the retention by Masters of the option to use the Minch in times of adverse weather. The Agency is continuing to monitor closely the ship movement reports received by Stornoway Coastguard, and to follow-up any reported sightings of tankers that it receives periodically from other local sources.

The Agency is taking forward Lord Donaldson's recommendation that mobile radar should be used to survey the density and type of maritime traffic around the United Kingdom coast, and to ensure compliance with existing ship routeing and reporting recommendations. Planning is at an early stage, but it is envisaged that the waters of the Minch will be surveyed in this way over the coming year.

### M25

**Ms Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will set out the timetable in respect of his plans *(a)* to widen the existing carriageway of the M25 to five lanes in each direction between junctions 12 and 14 and 15 to 16 and *(b)* to create six lanes in each direction between junctions 14 and 15; [21577]

(2) what public inquiries will be held in respect of the proposed M25 widening between junctions 12 and 16; [21584]

(3) when he proposes to publish his environmental statements in respect of proposals to accommodate projected M25 traffic growth for the next 15 years. [21583]

**Mr. Watts:** The Highways Agency has embarked upon design work and an environmental assessment of the widening proposals following my right hon. Friend's announcement on 3 April. The agency expects to publish details of the scheme between junctions 12 and 15, including an environmental statement, early next year. A series of local public exhibitions will be held to provide an opportunity for people to see the proposals and discuss them with agency staff.

Preparation of the scheme between junctions 15 and 16 will take longer. Subsequent progress on both schemes will depend on successful completion of any necessary statutory procedures. If design work were to confirm that the proposals could be contained within the curtilage of the existing road layout, there would be no statutory obligation to hold a public inquiry.

**Ms Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures he proposes to minimise the effects of noise arising from proposals to extend the M25. [21574]

**Mr. Watts:** This will be achieved by a comprehensive set of mitigation measures, including additional and heightened noise barriers.

**Ms Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set out his budget and precise proposals for land purchase in respect of the proposed M25 widening between junctions 12 to 16. [21578]

**Mr. Watts:** The precise amount of land, if any, to be purchased has yet to be assessed following further design work and the projected cost will depend upon estimates provided by the Valuation Office Agency.

**Ms Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he now has to introduce measures to enable the M25 motorway to perform its function as part of the strategic road network; and if he will make a statement. [21579]

**Mr. Watts:** The M25 is presently performing its function as part of the strategic road network.

### New Motorways (Cost)

**Mr. William O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the average cost per mile of new motorways. [21670]

**Mr. Watts:** This is an operational matter for the Highways Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

*Letter from Laurie Haynes to Mr. William O'Brien, dated 4 May 1995:*

The Minister for Railways and Roads, Mr. John Watts MP, has asked me to write to you in reply to your recent Parliamentary Question concerning new motorway costs.

The cost of building a new motorway varies from site to site and is dependent on the standard of provision—ie, the number of traffic lanes in each direction, location, terrain and ground condition.

The typical cost of constructing a mile of new three lane motorway is shown below at 1994 prices.

*£ million*

| *Road standard environment* | *Typical cost* |
|---|---|
| Dual 3 lane motorway in rural environment | 8 to 17 |
| Dual 3 lane motorway in urban environment | 14 to 20 |

The above includes the cost of design and the cost of purchasing land but excludes VAT.

### European Regional Development Fund

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 5 December 1994, *Official Report*, columns *35–36*, if he will list those projects in privatised companies which have received European regional development funding since privatisation indicating *(a)* the level of funding and *(b)* the dates when it was received. [20574]

**Mr. Norris:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Energy, on 1 May *Official Report*, column *14*.

### London Underground

**Ms Glenda Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many safety-related track speed restrictions were imposed on the London Underground network in each year from 1990 to 1995.

**Mr. Norris:** This information is not available in the form requested.

## ENVIRONMENT

### "Remedying Environmental Damage"

**Mr. Jenkin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to publish the Government's response to the report, "Remedying Environmental Damage", by the House of Lords Select Committee on the European Communities. [23139]

**Mr. Atkins:** The Department of the Environment has today published the Government response to the Committee's report and copies have been placed in the Library of the House.

## LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

### Legal Aid

**Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the cost to public funds which has been expended on legal aid in all vaccine damage cases in each year since 1979, giving the figure for *(a)* legal fees and *(b)* medical expenses. [21418]

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** The information requested is not available.

### Equal Opportunities

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what progress has been made within his Department on equal opportunities matters. [21491]

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** The Lord Chancellor's Department has an equal opportunities policy statement in place. To support this, the Department has three separate action plans to achieve equality of opportunity for people of ethnic minority origin, for women and men and for disabled people. These action plans are regularly monitored and any necessary corrective action is taken to ensure that the policy is properly implemented.

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what progress he hopes to achieve in his Department over the next three months to push forwards the declaration signed in October 1994 at the Vienna conference in preparation for the fourth UN conference on women; and if he will incorporate a section on equal opportunities in his Department's annual report. [21493]

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** The Government are committed to the principles set out in the regional platform for action agreed at the preparatory conference in Vienna for the fourth UN world conference on women. We have taken these forward through a wide range of programmes and initiatives and will continue to do so. Our Department's annual report already incorporates a section on equal opportunities. We shall continue to cover equality issues in our annual report.

**Ms. Eagle:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department which Minister has responsibility for equal opportunity issues. [21490]

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** I am the Minister who has responsibility for equal opportunities within the Lord Chancellor's Department.

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will publish the gender assessment being prepared by his Department. [21492]

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** This Department's policy, in line with guidance issued in 1992 by the ministerial group on women's issues, is that policy proposals should ensure

that unlawful or unjustifiable race or sex discrimination does not occur and that similar principles should apply to people with disabilities.

### Mrs. Kuldip Kaur

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department when permission for an appeal by Mrs. Kuldip Kaur—Ref:Imm/ECR/0152/94s—was granted; on what date the post in Delhi was informed; on what date the explanatory statement was received; if the post has informed him of the correct case references; and if he will make a statement. [21730]

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** The regional adjudicator will decide as a preliminary issue on 12 May 1995 whether the appeal by Mrs. Kuldip Kaur may proceed out of time. If permission is granted, the immigration appellate authorities will request the post in New Delhi to prepare and forward the explanatory statement.

### Public Records

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what consideration has been given to reducing the time in which records held by the Public Record Office are kept confidential. [21986]

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** Consideration was given at the time of the July 1993 White Paper on Open Government, Cm 2290, as to whether the 30-year closure period prescribed by the Public Records Act 1967 should be reduced.

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department (1) what is the reason for the withholding from release at the Public Record Office of the 1956 Medical Research Council paper on the report on Hiroshima and Nagasaki pregnancy studies, document reference D314/49; [22016]

(2) what is the reason for the withholding from release at the Public Record Office of the 1956 Medical Research Council report on leukaemia radiation, including Hiroshima and Nagasaki, containing mutation rates and minimum effective doses of radiation in various plants and animals, document reference D314/46. [22015]

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** Although the Medical Research Council is not governed by the Public Records Acts, it has acted to ensure that its archives are properly preserved and made accessible to researchers by transferring historical records to the Public Record Office. Questions of this nature should normally be directed to the MRC. Nevertheless, I am able to say on this occasion that the continued retention of these files by the MRC is due to preparation activity in relation to the transfer of MRC material.

### National Survey of Court Users

**Mr. Garnier:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department when he expects to make an announcement about the results of the national survey of courts users. [23141]

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** The report on the findings of the survey is published today, and copies have been placed in the Library.

## TREASURY

### VAT Audits

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many VAT audits have been conducted into the returns of the unlicensed private car hire or minicab firms in Greater London during each of the past three years; and if he will make a statement. [21173]

**Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** The information is not available. Customs central records do not distinguish licensed from unlicensed operators of taxis and other private hire.

### EU Convergence Plans

**Sir Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if the EU Commission will make public its reactions to the convergence plans submitted by member states of the EU; [22552]

(2) how many member states have now submitted their convergence plans to the EU Commission; when the United Kingdom submitted such a plan; and if he will publish it; [22551]

(3) what consideration has been given to national convergence programmes by the Monetary Committee of the EU and by the ECOFIN council. [22553]

**Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** The ECOFIN council has generally assessed each member state's initial convergence programme, on the basis of a report from the Commission and the Monetary Committee. The practice has varied for updated programmes, depending on the scale of any changes to the plans. Where there is no specific discussion, subsequent convergence programmes will be one of the sources of information used by the Commission in preparing reports for the council's regular multilateral surveillance discussions.

The Commission does not publish its assessment of national convergence programmes but when ECOFIN considers a convergence programme, it publishes the conclusions of its discussion in the form of a press notice.

All member states—apart from Luxembourg and the three new members, Austria, Finland and Sweden—have adopted convergence programmes. Revised and updated programmes have also been adopted, where appropriate, in the light of economic developments.

The UK produced an updated programme in March this year, based on the 1995–96 "Financial Statement and Budget Report". A copy of this and previous convergence programmes can be found in the House of Commons Library.

### Departmental Annual Report

**Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much staff time, and at what estimated cost, was put into compiling the departmental annual report; and what were the figures for each year for which figures are available since 1990. [20171]

**Mr. Nelson:** To estimate the staff time for each year since 1990 would incur disproportionate cost. For the 1995 report—"Chancellor of the Exchequer's small Departments", Cm 2817—it is estimated that across the seven departments covered by the report approximately 50 man days, at a cost of some £17,000, was spent compiling the departmental report.

**Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what measures the Department takes to assess the cost and staff implications of compiling material for the departmental annual report. [20172]

**Mr. Nelson:** The departmental report sets out spending plans, priorities, targets and achievements of the departments for which the Chancellor is responsible. The cost and staff implications for compiling material are kept to the minimum necessary to produce a clear and informative report.

### Financial Institutions

**Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what role the Bank of England has taken in promoting and encouraging the merger or takeover by other financial institutions of building societies. [21905]

(2) what encouragement his Department is giving financial institutions to merge, amalgamate or takeover competitors. [21929]

**Mr. Nelson:** None. Such decisions are a matter for the commercial judgment of the directors and owners of those institutions.

### Abbey National

**Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when was the most recent meeting he had with the chairman of the Abbey National. [21930]

**Mr. Nelson:** My right hon. and learned Friend has not had a meeting with the chairman of the Abbey National since becoming Chancellor.

### Equal Opportunities

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what progress has been made within his Department on equal opportunities matters. [21517]

**Mr. Nelson:** In the last year, the Treasury ran a comprehensive programme of equal opportunities awareness training—attended by 75 per cent. of staff—issued a booklet to all staff outlining all aspects of equal opportunity policies which also included targets to fulfil the Treasury's undertakings as a member of Opportunity 2000 and an action plan on ethnic minorities. A survey of provision and arrangements for disabled staff was undertaken and an action plan is being prepared.

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what progress he hopes to achieve in his Department over the next three months to push forward the declaration signed in October 1994 at the Vienna conference in preparation for the fourth UN conference on women; and if he will agree to incorporate a section on equal opportunities in his Department's annual report. [21519]

**Mr. Nelson:** The Government are committed to the principles set out in the regional platform for action agreed at the preparatory conference in Vienna for the fourth UN world conference on women. We have taken these forward through a wide range of programmes and initiatives and will continue to do so.

The Treasury's latest annual report—March 1995, Cm 2817—set out the Department's progress on equal opportunities issues. The Treasury will continue to publish information on equal opportunities issues in its annual report, in accordance with the recommendations in the Oughton report,—"Career Management and Succession Planning in the Civil Service, Cabinet Office (OPSS), 1994," and the White Paper,—"The Civil Service, Taking Forward Continuity and Change", Cm 2748.

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish the gender assessment being prepared by his Department. [21518]

**Mr. Nelson:** The Treasury's policy, in line with guidance issued in 1992 by the ministerial group on women's issues, is that policy proposals should ensure that unlawful or unjustifiable sex or race discrimination does not occur and that similar principles apply to people with disabilities. This scrutiny is part of a continuous and routine process, as part of policy advice to Ministers.

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which Minister in his Department has responsibility for equal opportunities issues. [21516]

**Mr. Nelson:** I am the Minister responsible for equal opportunities issues.

### Industrial Production

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the rate of increase in industrial production on the United Kingdom in each year since 1992; and what were the comparable figures for (i) the United States of America, (ii) Italy, (iii) Germany and (iv) Japan. [22208]

**Mr. Nelson:** Industrial production data for the United States of America, Italy, Germany and Japan can be found in the monthly OECD publication "Main Economic Indicators". UK industrial production data can be found on the CSO database, which is available in the House of Commons Library.

### Export-led Growth (Definition)

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his definition of export-led growth, with particular reference to the inclusion of *(a)* North sea oil and gas and *(b)* imports of manufactures. [22160]

**Mr. Nelson:** Changes in both gross and net exports are considered when assessing the sources of GDP growth. More detailed analysis looking at the commodity composition of exports and imports may also be relevant.

### Taxpayers

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update the answer to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) of 26 October 1993, *Official Report*, columns *571-72*, providing estimates for 1994–95 and 1995–96 for the number of taxpayers with gross and taxable income in income bands up to £150,000 supplying data at intervals of not more than £10,000. [21004]

**Sir George Young** *[holding answer 25 April 1995]:* Available information is given in the tables. The increase in taxpayer numbers is largely due to economic growth. Net effect of tax changes this April was to take more than 100,000 people out of tax. In addition, the number of people in work is increasing—the United Kingdom work force in employment went up 174,000 between December 1993 and December 1994.

£

| | Number of taxpayers by range of Gross income[1] (000) | Taxable income[2] (000) |
|---|---|---|
| *1994–95* | | |
| Under 5,000 | 2,200 | 8,500 |
| 5,000 to 10,000 | 7,900 | 6,600 |
| 10,000 to 15,000 | 6,000 | 4,500 |
| 15,000 to 20,000 | 3,900 | 2,700 |
| 20,00 to 25,000 | 2,300 | 1,400 |
| 25,000 to 30,000 | 1,300 | 720 |
| 30,000 to 40,000 | 1,100 | 660 |
| 40,000 to 50,000 | 420 | 280 |
| 50,000 to 70,000 | 280 | 190 |
| 70,000 to 80,000 | 60 | 50 |
| Over 80,000 | 180 | 140 |
| Total taxpayers | 25,700 | 25,700 |
| *1995–96* | | |
| Under 5,000 | 1,900 | 8,400 |
| 5,000 to 10,00 | 7,900 | 6,600 |
| 10,000 to 15,000 | 6,100 | 4,500 |
| 15,000 to 20,000 | 4,100 | 2,800 |
| 20,000 to 25,000 | 2,500 | 1,500 |
| 25,000 to 30,000 | 1,400 | 790 |
| 30,000 to 40,000 | 1,200 | 740 |
| 40,000 to 50,000 | 460 | 310 |
| 50,000 to 70,000 | 330 | 210 |
| 70,000 to 80,000 | 60 | 50 |
| Over 80,000 | 200 | 160 |
| Total taxpayers | 26,200 | 26,200 |

[1] Gross income is defined as total income for income tax purposes. It excludes income from certain social security benefits and some investment income such as National Savings Certificates.

[2] Taxable income is defined as gross income for income tax purposes less those allowances and reliefs which are available at the taxpayer's marginal rate.

### Company Ownership

**Mr. David Porter:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the circumstances in which a company owned 51 per cent. by the Government of another European Union country and 49 per cent. by an American company can bid by competitive tender for British business. [22047]

**Mr. Nelson** *[holding answer 2 May 1995]:* The EC treaty would normally require a company established in a member state to be treated equally with British suppliers. The treaty and the transparency directive—80/723/EEC as amended—will ensure that public funding which could give competitive advantage is subject to scrutiny. For public contracts and certain contracts in the energy, water, transport and telecommunications sectors, the EC procurement directives reinforce the treaty provisions and, as a rule, require competition. For Government contracts, the policy is to seek best value for money through competition, normally by competitive tender. However, it is not possible to give a definitive reply on the eligibility of a particular company without knowing the full circumstances.

### Civil Servants

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the individual value of each *(a)* compulsory early retirement and *(b)* flexible early retirement package received by civil servants leaving his Department on grounds of limited efficiency in each of the last five years. [22075]

**Mr. Nelson** *[holding answer 2 May 1995]:* Compensation payments for early retirement on grounds of limited efficiency are age, salary and service related. There have been three retirements from the Treasury on grounds of limited efficiency over the past five financial years—all flexible early retirements—as follows:

| | Annual compensation payment to age 60 (£ rate pa) | Superannuation lump sum (£) | Lump sum compensation payment (£) | Compensation in lieu of notice (if any) (£) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *1990–91* | | | | |
| Flexible | 14,191.15 | 39,087.10 | 0 | 0 |
| Flexible | 3,736.76 | 10,299.15 | 0 | 0 |
| *1991–92* | | | | |
| Flexible | 15,411.50 | 44,680.00 | 0 | 0 |

## LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

### Equal Opportunities

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Lord President of the Council (1) what progress has been made within his Department on equal opportunities matters; [21542]

(2) if he will publish the gender assessment being prepared by his Department; [21543]

(3) which Minister in his Department has responsibility for equal opportunities issues. [21541]

**Mr. Newton:** The Privy Council Office, of whose 38 staff 23 are women, continues to operate as an equal opportunities employer within the relevant code. My Department has no plans to prepare a gender assessment. No Minister within the Department has particular responsibility for equal opportunities issues.

## DUCHY OF LANCASTER

### Civil Servants

**Mr. Peter Griffiths:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many civil servants of executive grade were in post in 1980, 1990 and 1995. [22539]

**Mr. Horam:** Information for the years from 1980 to 1994 can be found in table 4 of "Civil Service Statistics", copies of which are in the Library. Information for 1995 is not yet available.

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the individual value of each *(a)* compulsory early retirement and *(b)* flexible early retirement package received by civil servants leaving his Department on grounds of limited efficiency in each of the last five years. [22091]

**Mr. David Hunt:** I am also answering on behalf of the Prime Minister.

Four elements usually make up the package received by those leaving on limited efficiency grounds—compulsory early retirement. The first three are the payments which would be made under the principal civil service pension scheme. The fourth element is set out in the civil service management code. The four elements are as follows:

1. An annual compensation payment/pension based on 1/80th of pensionable pay multiplied by the length of reckonable service. The reckonable service will usually include an enhancement of up to 6 2/3 years.
2. A lump sum of three times the pension.
3. A lump sum compensation payment of up to six months salary.
4. Pay in lieu of notice of up to six months salary.

Flexible early retirement does not include the third and fourth elements listed above.

The figures below cover the Cabinet Office—including the OPSS and its agencies—HMSO, and the COI. There have been four compulsory early retirements and one flexible early retirement on limited efficiency grounds in the past five financial years.

| | *Annual compensation payments to age 60* £ *pa* | *Superannuation lump sum* £ | *Lump sum compensation payment* £ | *Compensation in lieu or notice (if any)* £ |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *1990–91* | | | | |
| Compulsory | 7,000.19 | 18,025.17 | 11,901.54 | 11,974.00 |
| *1991–92* | | | | |
| Compulsory | 14,007.71 | 36,190.06 | 18,481.91 | 17,860.00 |
| *1992–93* | | | | |
| Compulsory | 11,737.00 | 33,480.60 | 11,737.00 | 0 |
| Flexible | 12,217.00 | 33,477.73 | 0 | 0 |
| *1993–94* | | | | |
| Compulsory | 8,541.59 | 25,140.95 | 4,103.33 | 0 |

*1994–95*

There have been no instances of compulsory early retirement or flexible early retirement on limited efficiency grounds in the central Department, HMSO, COI or the executive agencies in the financial year 1994–95.

## OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

### Educational Low-priced Book Scheme

**Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the success of the educational low-priced book scheme in furthering the education and training of students in developing countries. [22150]

**Mr. Baldry:** A review of the educational low-priced books scheme in 1994 revealed that about a third of books sold under ELBS went to prosperous countries, including Hong Kong, Malaysia and Turkey. Our assessment is that the scheme is not reaching poorer students in the poorest countries who cannot afford to buy books and therefore is not able to further the education and training of many students in developing countries.

**Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what was the result of the review of the educational low-priced book scheme; and if he will list those who were consulted during the review; [22153]

(2) what measures he intends to take to ensure that the work of the educational low-priced book scheme is maintained and adequately funded; and if he will make a statement. [22155]

**Mr. Baldry:** The educational low-priced book scheme is being phased out over two years. During this period, new strategies will be developed to achieve improved targeting and access to key text books and other essential learning materials for poorer students in the poorest countries, in pursuit of our developmental objectives.

The Publishers Association, publishing houses, the administrators of the scheme—International Book Development Ltd.—the British Council, ODA programme managers, ODA professional advisory groups and overseas students studying in the UK were consulted during the course of the review.

**Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the educational low-priced book scheme operational budget for 1994; how this is distributed; and how many administrative staff are involved. [22154]

**Mr. Baldry:** The total budget in the financial year 1994–95 was £1.53 million, including £0.2 million for administration. International Book Development Ltd. administer the scheme under contract to ODA.

Details of sales by region, country and subject coverage from 1985 to 1993 will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses shortly.

**Mrs Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list *(a)* the overseas countries, *(b)* the number of students and *(c)* the number of further educational establishments to have benefited from the educational low-priced book scheme. [22152]

**Mr. Baldry:** The educational low-priced books scheme has been available in the following countries:

*Africa*—Botswana, Burundi, Cameroon, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

*Asia*—Bangladesh, Bhutan, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, The Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Phillipines, Sri Lanka, Thailand.

*Pacific*—Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu, Western Samoa.

*Caribbean and Atlantic*—Antigua, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Honduras, Jamaica, St. Kitts-Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Trinidad and Tobago.

*Mediterranean and Near East*—Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Turkey.

Under the scheme, books are sold through local commercial outlets. There is thus no central record of the number of students who have purchased books or which further education establishments may have benefited from the scheme.

**Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs by what criteria he judges the value of the educational low-price book scheme in the sphere of higher education and vocational training in the developing world. [22149]

**Mr. Baldry:** The value of the educational low-priced books scheme is assessed against our normal developmental criteria. Our aim is to provide support for education for the poorer students in the poorest countries in the best targeted and most cost-effective way.

**Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the effect of the discontinuation of the educational low-priced book scheme on overseas students from developing countries who sit examinations set by the royal colleges. [22151]

**Mr. Baldry:** Phasing out the educational low-priced books scheme should not prevent developing country students who sit examinations set by the royal colleges from purchasing key text books. Text books provided under the scheme are predominately undergraduate rather than postgraduate. Since the books are sold through commercial outlets, the scheme cannot be targeted on specific groups of students. We intend to introduce a new strategy aimed at the needs of the poorer students in the poorest countries and which will not subsidise those students or others who can afford to pay the full price for books.

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

### Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what status has been accorded to the Palestine Liberation Organisation at the non-proliferation treaty conference at the United Nations in New York. [22020]

**Mr. David Davis:** The conference has agreed to a request from the permanent observer mission of Palestine that Palestine be granted observer status.

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list these states party to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty which accused the United Kingdom of breaking article I of the non-proliferation treaty, through the United Kingdom's military nuclear agreements with the United States of America, in representations made at the non-proliferation treaty conference in New York on 21 April. [22024]

**Mr. David Davis:** Mexico, quoting from an unsubstantiated report. UK-US collaboration is in full accord with the obligations imposed by the NPT.

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response the United Kingdom delegation to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty review conference in New York made to the criticisms made by Turkey in main committee II of the conference that existing safeguards at reprocessing plants are inadequate. [22021]

**Mr. David Davis:** The statement by the Turkish delegation in main committee II dealt generally with International Atomic Energy Authority safeguards. We do not accept that IAEA safeguards measures on declared nuclear materials are inadequate.

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response has been made by the United Kingdom delegation to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty conference in New York to the proposal by the Netherlands at the conference that full scope nuclear safeguards should apply to all nuclear facilities and materials without discrimination. [22023]

**Mr. David Davis:** The Dutch Foreign Minister, Mr Hans Van Mierlo, urged the NPT review and extension conference to accept the principle of the application of full scope safeguards on all peaceful nuclear activities without discrimination in nuclear weapon and non nuclear weapon States. All civil nuclear material in the United Kingdom is subject to international safeguards.

**Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when Her Majesty's Government will respond to operative paragraph 2 of the European Parliament's motion on the extension of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, adopted on 5 April. [22351]

**Mr. David Davis:** The extension of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty is too important to be held hostage to any other issue.

**Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government to the proposal made by the Government of South Africa at the nuclear non-proliferation treaty review and extension conference for the establishment of a committee to meet between review conferences to consider ways of strengthening the treaty. [22353]

**Mr. David Davis:** We believe that the treaty's review procedures provide ample opportunity for states' parties to voice their concerns about the implementation of the treaty, but we are giving careful consideration to the South African proposals.

### East Timor

**Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 8 March, *Official Report*, column *198*, on what date the staff

attached to the jakarta embassy who visited East Timor on 14 to 19 November 1991 visited Wara Husada number 4 military hospital. [22285]

**Mr. Goodlad:** The member of the British embassy staff in Jakarta who visited East Timor from 14 to 19 November 1991 did not visit the Wara Husada number 4 military hospital.

### British Prisoners Abroad

**Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many United Kingdom citizens were serving prison sentences in overseas prisons for drug offences on 18 April; and if he will list the figures *(a)* by gender *(b)* by country in what the sentences are being served. [22379]

**Mr. Baldry:** On 18 April 1995, there were 999 British citizens serving sentences for drugs offences around the world. In addition, there were a further 321 other British nationals, and others to whom we extend consular protection, for example, British dependent territories citizens, unrepresented Commonwealth nationals or EU nationals. Following is a table giving the breakdown by national status and by whereabouts.

A division by gender could be provided only at a disproportionate cost.

*British citizens and others in prison overseas for drugs offences on 18 April 1995*

| | [1]*BC* | [2]*BDTC* | [3]*BS* | [4]*BPP* | [5]*CC* | [6]*HKCOI* | [7]*NONBRIT* | *Total* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Angola | 1 | — | — | — | — | — | — | 1 |
| Argentina | 6 | — | — | — | — | — | — | 6 |
| Australia | 14 | 4 | 1 | — | — | 3 | — | 22 |
| Austria | 4 | 12 | — | — | — | — | — | 16 |
| Bahrain | 2 | — | — | — | — | — | — | 2 |
| Barbados | 4 | — | — | — | — | — | — | 4 |
| Belgium | 24 | 1 | — | — | 1 | — | — | 26 |
| Bolivia | 1 | — | — | — | — | — | — | 1 |
| Brazil | 8 | — | — | — | — | — | 3 | 11 |
| Canada | 4 | 2 | — | — | — | — | — | 6 |
| China | 3 | — | — | — | — | — | — | 3 |
| CIS | 0 | 1 | — | — | 1 | — | — | 2 |
| Colombia | 2 | — | — | — | 1 | — | — | 3 |
| Costa Rica | 1 | — | — | — | 1 | — | — | 2 |
| Cuba | 1 | — | — | — | — | — | — | 1 |
| Denmark | 17 | 1 | — | — | — | 1 | — | 19 |
| Egypt | — | — | — | — | 4 | — | — | 4 |
| Equador | 1 | — | — | — | — | — | — | 1 |
| Ethiopia | 1 | — | — | — | — | — | — | 1 |
| Fiji | 2 | — | — | — | — | — | — | 2 |
| Finland | 1 | — | — | — | — | — | — | 1 |
| France | 289 | [illegible] | 2 | — | 8 | — | 1 | 300 |
| Germany | 20 | [illegible] | — | — | — | 1 | — | 23 |
| Ghana | 1 | — | — | — | — | — | — | 1 |
| Grand Cayman | 1 | — | — | — | — | — | — | 1 |
| Greece | 10 | 2 | — | — | 14 | — | — | 26 |
| Hong Kong | 3 | — | — | — | — | — | — | 3 |
| Iceland | 1 | — | — | — | — | — | — | 1 |
| India | 17 | — | — | — | — | — | — | 17 |
| Indonesia | 1 | — | — | — | 1 | — | — | 2 |
| Israel | 1 | — | — | — | — | — | — | 1 |
| Italy | 11 | 3 | — | — | 3 | — | — | 17 |
| Jamaica | 5 | — | — | — | — | — | 1 | 6 |
| Japan | 18 | 9 | — | — | — | — | — | 27 |
| Kenya | 2 | — | — | — | — | — | — | 2 |
| Korea | 2 | — | — | — | — | — | — | 2 |
| Luxembourg | 0 | 1 | — | — | — | — | — | 1 |
| Malaysia | 1 | 1 | — | — | — | 1 | — | 3 |
| Malawi | — | — | — | — | 1 | — | — | 1 |
| Mexico | 1 | — | 2 | — | 2 | — | — | 5 |
| Morocco | 22 | 2 | — | — | 5 | — | 1 | 30 |
| Nepal | 5 | — | — | — | 4 | — | — | 9 |
| Neth. Antilles | 1 | — | — | — | 1 | — | — | 2 |
| Netherlands | 17 | 3 | — | — | 1 | — | — | 21 |
| New Zealand | 5 | — | — | — | — | — | — | 5 |
| Nigeria | 3 | — | — | — | — | — | — | 3 |
| Norway | 7 | — | — | — | — | — | — | 7 |
| Pakistan | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | 0 |
| Papua New Guinea | 1 | — | — | — | — | — | — | 1 |
| Paraguay | 1 | — | — | — | — | — | — | 1 |
| Peru | 3 | — | — | — | — | — | — | 3 |
| Philippines | 2 | 3 | — | — | — | 8 | 1 | 14 |
| Portugal | 9 | — | — | — | 5 | — | — | 14 |

*British citizens and others in prison overseas for drugs offences on 18 April 1995*

| | [1]BC | [2]BDTC | [3]BS | [4]BPP | [5]CC | [6]HKCOI | [7]NONBRIT | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Singapore | 1 | 2 | — | — | — | 1 | — | 4 |
| Slovenia | — | — | — | — | 1 | — | — | 1 |
| Spain | 258 | 10 | — | 1 | 35 | — | — | 304 |
| Sri Lanka | 4 | — | — | — | — | — | — | 4 |
| Sweden | 13 | — | — | — | — | — | 1 | 14 |
| Switzerland | 9 | 2 | 1 | — | — | — | — | 12 |
| Taiwan | 3 | — | — | — | — | — | — | 3 |
| Tanzania | 1 | — | — | — | — | — | — | 1 |
| Thailand | 23 | 62 | — | — | 34 | 19 | — | 138 |
| Trinidad | 9 | — | — | — | — | — | — | 9 |
| Turkey | 9 | — | — | — | 6 | — | — | 15 |
| Turks and Caicos | — | — | — | — | — | — | 1 | 1 |
| UAE | 0 | — | 1 | — | 1 | — | — | 2 |
| United States of America | 112 | 6 | — | — | 2 | 6 | 2 | 128 |
| Viet nam | 0 | 1 | — | — | — | — | — | 1 |
| Zimbabwe | 1 | — | — | — | — | — | — | 1 |
| Totals | 999 | 130 | 7 | 1 | 132 | 40 | 11 | 1,320 |

[1] British Citizen.
[2] British Dependant Territories Citizen.
[3] British Subject (without citizenship) or a person who has British Subject status by virtue of a connection with Southern Ireland.
[4] British Protected Person.
[5] Commonwealth Citizen.
[6] Holder of Hong Kong certificate of identity.
[7] Where none of the above are applicable eg. Irish nationals.

### Mr. and Mrs. Anwar Jahan Rashid

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when a decision is going to be taken on the application made to the United Kingdom post in Islamabad by Mr. and Mrs. Anwar Jahan Rashid to visit the United Kingdom, Ref: V95/000618; and if he will make a statement. [22591]

**Mr. Baldry:** I have instituted inquiries and shall arrange for the migration and visa correspondence unit to write to the hon. Member when these are complete.

## HEALTH

### Prescriptions

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what level of net disposable income is required to allow *(a)* a single and *(b)* a married person to get help with NHS prescriptions under the NHS low income scheme. [19397]

**Mr. Malone:** The figure will vary according to individual circumstances. Intending claimants are advised to consult leaflet AB11—"Help with NHS costs"—a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

### Dental Services

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many additional staff will be required; and what will be the cost of introducing the more rigorous prior approval system for dental care; [20702]

(2) if she will make a statement on the details of the proposed more rigorous prior approval mechanism for dental treatment under the NHS; and to what extent this has been influenced by a study of the system in Russia; [20680]

(3) what is the maximum delay in providing dental care she will approve following the introduction of the more rigorous prior approval mechanism for dental care; [20696]

(4) what estimate she has made of the total additional administrative costs which will be incurred by dentists providing NHS dental care when the more rigorous prior approval mechanism for dental care is introduced. [20703]

**Mr. Malone:** The Government will develop more rigorous prior approval mechanisms for dental care to ensure that all treatments that are clinically essential are available through national health service dentistry, but that only those treatments which are clinically essential and for which there is no clinically acceptable, less costly, alternative are provided. This will promote better use of available resources. The Government's proposals were not influenced by study of the system in Russia. Details of the mechanisms will be developed in consultation with the dental profession.

The aim is to develop guidelines and protocols which will promote a clear understanding among dentists of the conditions under which treatment may be approved. This should prevent the submission of inappropriate requests for approval. If there are fewer requests, then there would be fewer rejections.

There is no reason to expect that patients would have to wait for a longer period for treatment to be approved under more rigorous prior approval than they do at present. Nor need there be an increase in administrative cost for the Dental Practice Board.

### NHS Charges and Receipts

**Mrs. Beckett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the planned increase in charges and receipts from the figure given in the estimated outturn for 1994–95 to that cited in plans for 1995–96 NHS current and capital expenditure. [21755]

**Mr. Sackville:** The Government's expenditure plans, published in the departmental report, Cm 2812, show that

total national health service income from charges and receipts is expected to be £1,470 million in 1995–96, comparable to 1993–94 outturn of £1,466 million. This is some £230 million more than the forecast outturn for 1994–95, although this is subject to revision at outturn—for example, to reflect late recording of some receipts.

### Junior Doctors

**Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health from what date a compulsory requirement for junior doctors to serve in a casualty and accident department ceased to apply; what consultations took place between her Department and the relevant medical authorities concerning this change; and what estimate she has made of the impact of these measures on the supply of junior doctors to other departments. [21869]

**Mr. Malone:** The content of training programmes for junior doctors is the responsibility of the relevant royal college or faculty. Since January 1994, it has not been compulsory for doctors wishing to sit the fellowship examination of the Royal College of Surgeons to spend a part of their training programme in an accident and emergency department, although it is strongly recommended that they do so. Consultation on changes to training requirements are a matter for the relevant royal college.

We have consistently increased the number of junior doctors in recent years, both in accident and emergency medicine and in other specialties. The decision by some trainees, because of the change in the fellowship examination, not to opt to work in accident and emergency departments has also added to the supply of junior doctors in other specialties.

### Suicides

**Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many suicides occurred in England among *(a)* farmers, *(b)* farm workers and *(c)* the general population in each year since 1988. [21907]

**Mr. Bowis:** The information is shown in the table.

*Deaths assigned to ICD[1] codes E950–E959 (suicide and self-inflicted injury) and E980–E989 (injury undetermined whether accidentally or purposely inflicted), England, 1988–93*

| | *Farmers* | | *Farm workers* | | *All persons* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *E950–E959 suicide* | *E980–E989 undetermined* | *E950–E959 suicide* | *E980–E989 undetermined* | *E950–E959 suicide* | *E980–E989 undetermined* |
| 1988 | 43 | 6 | 25 | 3 | 3,968 | 1,987 |
| 1989 | 32 | 5 | 21 | 6 | 3,515 | 1,868 |
| 1990 | 33 | 8 | 21 | 9 | 3,710 | 1,884 |
| 1991 | 36 | 10 | 18 | 2 | 3,630 | 1,937 |
| 1992 | 31 | 7 | 17 | 8 | 3,675 | 1,866 |
| 1993[2] | 31 | 3 | 14 | 11 | 3,299 | 1,323 |

[1] International Classification of Diseases, 9th Revision.
[2] 1993 figures are provisional. The system of coding underlying cause of death in England and Wales was changed on 1 January 1993.

Numbers for 1993 may not be comparable to earlier years for some causes, including suicide and injury undetermined whether accidentally or purposely inflicted. Work is continuing to clarify this, and further details will be available later in the year.

### Marriages

**Dr. Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many marriages between British citizens and non-British, non-EU citizens were reported as bogus to the Registrar-General by individual registrars in each year since 1989. [21816]

**Mr. Sackville:** Superintendent registrars are instructed to send a report to the Registrar-General where they have good reason to suspect that a proposed marriage of a person from abroad has been arranged for the sole purpose of evading statutory immigration controls. The number of reports received from individual superintendent registrars since 1989 will be placed in the Library. Details of reports received of marriages between British citizens and non-British, non-EU citizens is not kept separately and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

### Residential Care

**Mr. Alan Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what estimates she makes of the numbers of married people of each sex who are contributing *(a)* all or *(b)* part of their income from occupational pensions to the costs of local authority provided residential or nursing care; [22278]

(2) how many married people of each sex in local authority provided residential or nursing home care have a spouse remaining in their own home; [22283]

(3) how many married people of each sex are in receipt of occupational pensions and in local authority provided residential or nursing home care; [22276]

(4) what is the estimated total amount of money deriving from occupational pensions contributed by married people to the costs of local authority provided residential and nursing home care. [22279]

**Mr. Bowis:** This information is not available centrally.

### GP Minor Surgery

**Ms Church:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what cost-benefit analysis has been carried out on the likely effect of retaining the restriction on the number of minor operations at the same time as improving general practitioner's surgeries; [22387]

(2) what limit is placed on general practitioners per quarter in respect of minor operations and for what reasons; and what assessment she has made of the consistency of this policy with a primary care driver approach to health care. [22389]

**Mr. Malone:** General practitioners may claim specific fees under the statement of fees and allowances for up to

15 minor surgical procedures a quarter. This represents a balanced approach between the procedures on the minor surgery list and the other responsibilities of GPs to their patients. Procedures not on the minor surgery list may be performed by GPs under direct contract with a local purchaser, where this will provide an efficient and effective service to patients.

**Ms Church:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to review the limit on minor operations to take into account *(a)* general practitioner list size and *(b)* differential needs across the country. [22388]

**Mr. Malone:** None.

### Care in the Community

**Ms Jowell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list those statutes, statutory instruments, circulars, advice notes and departmental letters concerned with provision of care in the community in a table showing *(a)* the full title and date of publication of each item, *(b)* a summary of its subject matter, *(c)* whether it is concerned with services provided by health authorities, local authorities or both, *(d)* the address of the location from which copies are available, *(e)* its costs, *(f)* whether the item is available to the public on request and *(g)* whether stocks are presently available. [21031]

**Mr. Bowis:** This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

### Clinical Audit

**Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the total cost of clinical audit in the national health service to date since 1991. [22458]

**Mr. Malone:** Between April 1991 and March 1995, £247 million was provided to health authorities and the royal colleges to support clinical audit in England. The main purpose of these funds has been to develop and sustain an infrastructure of clinical audit committees and audit support staff. The other cost associated with clinical audit is that of clinicians' time, which has not been costed, and is dependent on the pattern of each individual clinician's input to clinical audit.

### Personal Social Services

**Mrs. Beckett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total income generated from charges to receipts of personal social services in each year from 1982–83, expressed in 1995 prices. [22390]

**Mr. Bowis:** The information requested, up to 1993–94, the last year for which it is available, is shown in the table. The increase in 1993–94 reflects the growth in local authority care activity following the community care reforms.

*Fees and charges for personal social services*

| *Year* | *Fees and charges (£ million)* |
|---|---|
| 1982–83 | 609.4 |
| 1983–84 | 613.8 |
| 1984–85 | 605.4 |
| 1985–86 | 672.5 |
| 1986–87 | 668.5 |
| 1987–88 | 625.1 |
| 1988–89 | 599.4 |
| 1989–90 | 608.6 |
| 1990–91 | 568.6 |
| 1991–92 | 556.8 |
| 1992–93 | 530.2 |
| 1993–94 | 639.1 |

England totals derived from local authorities' annual expenditure returns on form RO3. Constant 1995–96 prices, based on gross domestic product indices.

### Public Bodies

**Dr. Wright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health which of the advisory non-departmental public bodies sponsored by her Department are under a statutory requirement to *(a)* publish their advice to the Government, *(b)* publish an annual report and *(c)* lay an annual report before Parliament; and if she will list those bodies with a statutory basis. [21161]

**Mr. Sackville** *[holding answer 27 April 1995]:* The following Department of Health advisory non-departmental public bodies have a statutory requirement to:

*Publish their advice to the Government:*
The Committee on Dental and Surgical Materials.
The Standing Dental Advisory Committee
*Publish an annual report:*
The British Pharmacopoeia Commission.
The Committee on the Safety of Medicines.
The Health Advisory Service
The Joint Planning Advisory Committee.
The Medicines Commission.
*Lay an annual report before Parliament:*
The British Pharmacopoeia Commission.
The Medicines Commission.

The following Department of Health advisory non-departmental public bodies have a statutory basis:

The Administration of Radioactive Substances Advisory Committee.
The British Pharmacopoeia Commission.
The Clinical Standards Advisory Group.
The Committee on Dental and Surgical Materials.
The Committee on the Safety of Medicines.
The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation.
The Medicines Commission.
The Standing Dental Advisory Committee.
The Standing Medical Advisory Committee.
The Standing Nursing and Midwifery Advisory Committee.
The Standing Pharmaceutical Advisory Committee.
The Unrelated Live Transplant Regulatory Authority.

### Dentomycin

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement outlining the reasons why Dentomycin was not included on the list of products available for dental prescribing. [22040]

**Mr. Malone** *[holding answer 1 May 1995]:* The list for dental prescribing contains medicinal products which patients can obtain on national health service prescription. Dentomycin is solely for use by a dental professional during the provision of treatment and, therefore, should not be included on the list.

## SCOTLAND

### East Kilbride Development Corporation

**Mr. Ingram:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the chairman and board of East Kilbride development corporation to discuss *(a)* the future of Scottish Nuclear and *(b)* the impact of the Rolls-Royce closure announcement on the local economy. [22383]

**Mr. Kynoch** *[holding answer 3 May 1995]:* My meeting with the chairman planned for 1 May was deferred because of parliamentary commitments. It is currently being rescheduled.

### Hospitality

**Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much was spent on official hospitality by his Department in 1994–95. [21209]

**Mr. Lang** *[holding answer 1 May 1995]:* The total expenditure on official hospitality for the Scottish Office for the financial year 1994–95 was 153,806.

### Farmers and Farm Workers

**Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total number of *(a)* farmers and *(b)* farm workers for each year since 1988, giving the figures on a percentage of the Scottish population. [21858]

**Sir Hector Monro:** The figures are as follows:

| | *1988* | *1989* | *1990* | *1991* | *1992* | *1993* | *1994* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Farmers | 30,484 | 31,348 | 30,397 | 29,531 | 28,965 | 27,741 | 28,206 |
| Percentage of population | 0.60 | 0.62 | 0.60 | 0.58 | 0.57 | 0.54 | 0.55 |
| Farm workers | 41,141 | 40,275 | 41,850 | 40,762 | 40,749 | 40,577 | 41,226 |
| Percentage of population | 0.81 | 0.79 | 0.82 | 0.80 | 0.80 | 0.79 | 0.80 |

*Source:*
Agricultural Census and General Register Office (Scotland).
*Note:*
Farmers includes full-time and part-time occupiers. Farm workers include full-time and part-time spouses of occupiers doing farm work, and hired or family labour. Excluded are young people working under Youth Training. The figures are derived from the main and minor holdings' agricultural census.

### Suicides

**Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many suicides occurred among *(a)* farmers, *(b)* farm workers, and *(c)* the general population in each year since 1988. [21909]

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** The number of deaths from suicide registered in Scotland since 1988, *(a)* where the deceased's occupation was given as "farmer" or "farm worker" and *(b)* in the general population, is as follows:

*Deaths registered as suicide among farmers, farm workers and the general population*

| *Year* | *Farmers* | *Farm workers*[1] | *General population* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1988 | 7 | 5 | 598 |
| 1989 | 12 | 7 | 527 |
| 1990 | 13 | 3 | 535 |
| 1991 | 11 | 7 | 525 |
| 1992 | 13 | 6 | 569 |
| 1993 | 9 | 8 | 615 |
| 1994[2] | 12 | 3 | 622 |

[1] Includes farmers' wives.
[2] 1994 figures are provisional.

### Geese, Islay

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many licences were issued under section 16 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to permit the killing of *(a)* barnacle and *(b)* Greenland whitefronted geese on Islay to prevent serious agricultural damage in each year since 1982. [22348]

**Sir Hector Monro:** *[holding answer 3 May 1995]:* The information is as follows:

| *Year* | *Number of barnacle licences* | *Number of whitefront licences* |
|---|---|---|
| 1982–83 | 14 | — |
| 1983–84 | 50 | — |
| 1984–85 | 34 | — |
| 1985–86 | 26 | — |
| 1986–87 | 29 | — |
| 1987–88 | 40 | 13 |
| 1988–89 | 30 | 2 |
| 1989–90 | 28 | 8 |
| 1990–91 | 24 | 13 |
| 1991–92 | 26 | 12 |
| 1992–93 | 6 | 2 |
| 1993–94 | 2 | 1 |
| 1994–95 | 2 | 2 |

### Ministerial Visits

**Mrs. Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of times he has visited Brussels in the last year; with which Commissioners he has met on each occasion; and which policy matters were discussed. [16051]

**Mr. Lang** *[holding answer 29 March 1995]:* In the last year, I have undertaken two visits to Brussels. On 8 and 9 September, I visited Brussels to participate in the 50th anniversary celebrations of the liberation of Belgium but did not meet Commissioners on that occasion. On 21 and 22 March, I again visited Brussels and met Commissioner Liikanen to discuss budget reforms and Commissioner Fischler to discuss Scottish agricultural issues and structural funds for rural areas. I also spoke to Commissioner Sir Leon Brittan about trade issues. My noble Friend the Minister of State visited Brussels on 8

March when he met Commissioner Bonino and discussed matters relating to fisheries policy.

In addition to these meetings, Scottish Ministers have attended the following meetings of the European Council of Ministers in Brussels and other locations:

| | *Meetings* | |
|---|---|---|
| 12 April 1994 | Fisheries Council | Minister of State |
| 27–28 May 1994 | Justice/Interior Issues | Minister of State |
| 3–4 June 1994 | Regional Policy | Mr. Stewart |
| 10 June 1994 | Fisheries Council | Sir Hector Monro |
| 28 September 1994 | Fisheries Council | Sir Hector Monro |
| 23 November 1994 | Fisheries Council | Sir Hector Monro |
| 19–20 December 1994 | Fisheries Council | Sir Hector Monro |
| 22 December 1994 | Fisheries Council (Continuation) | Lord Fraser |
| 6 April 1995 | Fisheries Council | Sir Hector Monro |

## TRADE AND INDUSTRY

### Official Receivers

**Mr. Garnier:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish the digest of responses of official receivers to the consultation undertaken, prior to the laying of the draft order enabling the contracting out of various of their functions. [23140]

**Mr. Jonathan Evans:** Yesterday, I published a digest of the responses of official receivers and copies have been laid in the Libraries of the House. They are also available in the Vote Office.

### Government Assistance

**Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the president of the Board of Trade what will be the level of Government expenditure on the support for products under research and the small firms merit award for research and technology schemes in 1995–96.

**Mr. Ian Taylor:** Estimated Government expenditure in 1995–96 will be £9.75 million on the SPUR scheme and £13.75 million on the SMART scheme, including Scotland and Wales.

### Exports and Imports

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his estimate of the proportion of United Kingdom exports in 1990 and 1994 which were *(a)* imported in the same form and *(b)* assembled in the United Kingdom from imported components. [22161]

**Mr. Needham:** The information is not available.

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a table showing for 1990, 1992 and 1994 the value and volume of production, imports, exports and home sales of the goods falling within SITCD75. [22162]

**Mr. Needham:** Information on trade for division 75 of the standard international trade classification is available from "Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom". Information on production is not available under this classification. Information on trade and manufacturers' sales for class 33 of the standard industrial classification 1980—office machinery and data processing equipment—in 1990 and 1992 was published by the central statistical office in business monitors PAS3301 and 3302. These publications are available in the Library of the House. Information for office machinery and computers in 1994 is expected to be published later this year by Taylor Nelson AGB in the 1994 edition of "UK Markets Annual Report 61".

### Computer Exports

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proportion of the United Kingdom export of computers is wholly or mainly constructed from imported components. [22163]

**Mr. Needham:** The information is not available.

### Inntrepreneur Estates Ltd.

**Mr. Wareing:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to receive the report of the Director of Fair Trading on the activities of Inntrepreneur Estates Ltd. [22439]

**Mr. Jonathan Evans:** I understand that the inquiry by the Director General of Fair Trading into discounts in the brewing industry is near to completion. I anticipate that he will then announce his conclusions as to whether there is a case for further action under the Fair Trading Act 1973.

**Mr. Wareing:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what communications he has had with the European Commission respecting the activities of Inntrepreneur Estates Ltd. [22440]

**Mr. Jonathan Evans:** I have nothing to add to the answer I gave the hon. Member on 3 March 1995, *Official Report*, column *751*.

### Military Goods (Exports)

**Mr. Cousins:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether, between December 1984 and August 1990, exporters were required to obtain end-user certificates for the export of goods, licensed under the Military List, to *(a)* Thailand, *(b)* Singapore, *(c)* Pakistan, *(d)* Portugal, *(e)* Cyprus and *(f)* Hong Kong. [19402]

**Mr. Ian Taylor:** I am having research done. I will be in touch in a short while.

## NATIONAL HERITAGE

### Acceptance in Lieu Scheme

**Mr. Fisher:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if it is his policy to maintain Her Majesty's Government's support for the acceptance in lieu scheme at its present levels. [22293]

**Mr. Dorrell:** I have no plans to change the present level of Government support for the acceptance in lieu scheme. This scheme, together with all my Department's spending commitments, is, however, being examined in our fundamental expenditure review. This is currently in progress and I cannot at this stage anticipate its findings.

## PRIME MINSTER

### Ministerial Documents

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will make it his policy to ensure that documents originated or acquired by Ministers in the course of their official duties are not sold by them or their heirs and assigns. [22621]

**The Prime Minister:** By convention, Prime Ministers, on leaving office, have taken with them copies of certain documents which they dealt with personally while in office. These include some documents originated or acquired by them in the course of their official duties. This convention has not applied to Ministers other than former Prime Ministers. The extent to which former Prime Ministers or their heirs and assigns may dispose of such papers, and how, depends on the circumstances of each case.

It is my policy that in future material removed from official custody at the end of an Administration should contain no official material other than that which is already in the public domain.

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Prime Minister in what circumstances a document subject when originated to the provisions of the Official Secrets Acts may be classified other than a state paper. [22527]

**The Prime Minister:** Documents originating from other than official sources, and which contain official information that should not be disclosed, come within the provisions of the Official Secrets Acts but are not state papers.

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Prime Minister (1) if retired Ministers are required to submit their memoirs for approval under the Official Secrets Acts before publication; [22531]

(2) if the right hon. Nigel Lawson submitted his memoirs for approval under the official Secrets Acts before publication, with particular reference to mention of the Governor of the Bank of England. [22622]

**The Prime Minister:** There is no requirement for former Ministers to submit their memoirs under the Official Secrets Acts before publication. The report of the Committee of Privy Counsellors on Ministerial Memoirs, Cmnd. 7386, recommended that former Ministers who wished to make public an account bearing on their ministerial life should let the Secretary of the Cabinet see in advance the full text of what they propose to say. The Cabinet Secretary offers advice to the author of the text, including on whether it contains material contravening the requirements of national security.

My right hon. and noble Friend Lord Lawson submitted his memoirs to the Cabinet Secretary in the normal way, without any particular reference.

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will refer to the Nolan committee the propriety of Ministers or their heirs retaining and using for private gain information or documents acquired in the course of their official duties. [22526]

**The Prime Minister:** I have no plans to do so.

### Engagements

**Sir Peter Tapsell:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 4 May. [21122]

**Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 4 May. [21121]

**The Prime Minister:** This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

### Central Computer Database

**Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Prime Minister what plans there are to create a central computerised database on individuals using the database of the national insurance recording system 2—to be available to other Government Departments; and if he will make a statement. [22540]

**The Prime Minister:** The recently announced replacement of the national insurance recording system—NIRS2—does not include any plans to create a separate computer database on individuals, nor does it involve extending access arrangements to the NIRS2 database to other than existing users of the current NIRS system.

### Churchill Papers

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his oral answer of 27 April to the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), *Official Report*, column 978, what steps he has taken to establish whether the papers sold by the Churchill family to the national heritage memorial fund were at any time covered by the provisions of the Official Secrets Acts. [22423]

**The Prime Minister:** Churchill college has been advised on which papers in the Churchill archive can be released to researchers and which need to be withheld.

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Prime Minister what steps the Government took to purchase the annotated eight-page typescript of Sir Winston Churchill's El Alamein speech sold by Sotheby's in December 1994; and whether this is included in the Churchill documents purchased by the national heritage memorial fund. [22421]

**The Prime Minister:** The manuscript to which the hon. Member refers was sold by a private owner and was one of many which Sir Winston Churchill gave away during his lifetime. At no time did it form part of the Churchill archive and it does not do so now. It is for the national institutions which maintain archives to decide whether to commit funds to the purchase of papers which appear on the open market.

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Prime Minister how many of the papers sold by the Churchill family to the national heritage memorial fund are to be found in the Public Record Office in their original or a duplicate form; and what copyright fees have to be paid to the Churchill family when such documents in either location are reproduced. [22525]

**The Prime Minister:** The papers purchased by the national heritage memorial fund are the non-state papers. They are not normally to be found in the Public Record Office in either original or duplicate form. Copyright in the papers purchased by the national heritage memorial fund is a matter for the copyright owners.

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Prime Minister whether he will request the trustees of the national lottery fund to hand back the Churchill papers to the family in return for the money they have received. [22419]

**The Prime Minister:** No. The integrity of the Churchill archive has now been secured for the nation by the purchase of the non-state papers from the Churchill family and by the transfer of the state papers similarly to Churchill college.

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will make it his policy to reduce the fees charged for access to and reproduction of the Churchill papers; and if he will publish the proposed scale of charges. [22420]

**The Prime Minister:** No fees are levied on access to the Churchill papers at Churchill college. Reproduction is a matter for the copyright owners as is the question of charges. A licence has been granted which waives the copyright fee in respect of the reproduction of Crown copyright material for the purposes of research and private study. Other charges, for example the commercial use of the papers, will be levied in accordance with normal practice.

### Civil Servants

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Prime Minister whether civil servants who have been allowed to publish material which relies in any particular on what they have learnt or done in the course of their employment by the Crown are expected to hand to the Crown any profit derived by the author from the publication. [22424]

**The Prime Minister:** The extent to which a civil servant may be required to account to the Crown for any profit made from such publication will depend on whether the author produced all or part of the work during official time and whether the work is based on or otherwise used Crown copyright material.

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Prime Minister in what circumstances civil servants may publish without prior approval any material based directly or indirectly on what they have learnt or done in the course of their employment by the Crown. [22422]

**The Prime Minister:** Civil servants must clear in advance material for publication which draws on official material or experience.

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list the individual value of each *(a)* compulsory early retirement and *(b)* flexible early retirement package received by civil servants leaving his Department on grounds of limited efficiency in each of the last five years. [22092]

**The Prime Minister** *[holding answer 2 May 1995]:* For these purposes my office is part of the Cabinet Office—Office of Public Service and Science. I refer the hon. Member to the reply given today by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

### Hospitality

**Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Prime Minister how much was spent on official hospitality in his official capacities in the financial year 1994–95. [21215]

**The Prime Minister** *[holding answer 1 May 1995]:* The provisional total is £30,000

### Rules of Succession

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Prime Minister (1) in which country of which Her Majesty is Head of State the inheritance of the Crown is prohibited to adherents of certain religions; [20852]

. (2) in which countries of which Her Majesty the Queen is Head of State *(a)* the oldest child and *(b)* the oldest male child of the monarch succeed to the throne. [20853]

**The Prime Minister** *[holding answer 25 April 1995]:* I am not aware that any other Commonwealth realm has rules relating to the succession to the throne.

## WALES

### Equal Opportunities

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what progress has been made within his Department on equal opportunities matters. [21471]

**Mr. Redwood:** My Department has a full programme to promote equal opportunities for all staff. It includes detailed programmes of action for women, for staff with a disability and for staff from ethnic minorities. Progress is monitored continuously and a report produced annually. Monitoring shows, for example, that the proportion of women in middle and senior management grades is increasing.

### Green Barriers

**Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his policy concerning green barriers. [22112]

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** Green barriers are a matter for local planning authorities, which may if they wish include proposals for such areas in their development plans together with appropriate policies.

### Green Belts

**Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his policy concerning green belts; and if he will make a statement. [22113]

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** It is for local planning authorities to decide whether green belts are necessary and useful within their area. It is then for an authority to promote a green belt through the development plan system allowing public consultation and discussion of both the principle and the detail of any proposals in the context of the whole plan.

### Wales TUC

**Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met the Wales TUC; and if he will make a statement. [22115]

**Mr. Redwood:** I last met the executive committee of the Wales TUC on 5 December last year, when a range of topics were discussed.

## EMPLOYMENT

### Training

**Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the planned level of Government expenditure on *(a)* TECs and *(b)* LECs in 1995–96. [22445]

**Mr. Paice:** In 1995–96, the Government are planning to invest in excess of £1.2 billion in training and enterprise councils in England. This funding will be provided by the Employment Department, the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of the Environment, through the single regeneration budget. It will cover the range of activities for which TECs are responsible, notably management of training and vocational education initiatives, business support services and local economic regeneration.

The Government also invest considerable sums in local enterprise companies in Scotland and TECs in Wales. The extent of this funding is a matter for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Wales.

## EDUCATION

### Grant-Maintained Schools

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to her answer of 5 December 1994, *Official Report*, columns *53-56*, if she will list, in chronological order, the "Going GM" conferences held in her Department on grant-maintained status since 21 November 1994 giving in each case, *(a)* the date, *(b)* the location, *(c)* the number of schools invited, *(d)* the number of schools represented, *(e)* the number of representatives attending and *(f)* the cost. [22596]

**Mr. Robin Squire:** The information requested is set out in the table.

| *Date* | *Location* | *Number of schools invited*[1] | *Number of schools represented* | *Number of delegates* | *Cost*[2] *£* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 December 1995 | Manchester | 3,192 | 61 | 127 | 9,273 |
| 27 January 1995 | Swindon | 357 | 24 | 65 | 5,446 |
| 23 February 1995 | Gatwick | 3,114 | 43 | 81 | 7,113 |
| 1 March 1995 | Norwich | 1,660 | 49 | 101 | 3,662 |
| 10 March 1995 | London | 3,500 | 75 | 147 | 7,327 |
| 14 March 1995 | Bournemouth | 3,114 | 75 | 164 | 7,044 |
| Total | | | | | 39,865 |

[1] The same schools were invited to more than one conference in order to give headteachers and governors more choice over date and location.
[2] Costs listed are those attributable to specific conferences.
In addition, there are two on-going contracts: one for support services, under which for these six conferences some £48,000 can be attributed, and one for mailings, with £8,500 attributable.

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many delegates attended the GM speakers' conference at the Hotel Russell on 27 and 28 February; and what was the total cost of *(a)* the conference and *(b)* expenses claimed by delegates. [22452]

**Mr. Robin Squire:** A total of 190 delegates from GM schools attended this conference, which cost £32,676. They have claimed a further £8,743 in travelling expenses.

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the total number of grant-maintained schools which submitted bids for the financial year 1995–96, for capital grant allocations for named projects; what was the value of the bids submitted; for how many schools an allocation for named projects was approved; and what was the total value of allocations for named projects. [22457]

**Mr. Robin Squire:** These matters are now the responsibility of the Funding Agency for Schools. I have asked the chairman of the funding agency to write to the hon. Member.

### Grant Maintained Schools Foundation Ltd.

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will list the offices of the Grant Maintained Schools Foundation giving, in each case, *(a)* the number of (i) information and (ii) administrative staff employed, *(b)* the rent paid for the offices and *(c)* to whom the rent is paid. [22455]

**Mr. Robin Squire:** The Grant Maintained Schools Foundation Ltd. has a network of seven local offices. The London office also serves as the headquarters. At the six offices in England, a total of 15.5 full-time equivalent staff are employed as shown. It is not possible to distinguish between information and administrative staff.

| *Location* | *Staff employed* |
|---|---|
| London | 9.7 |
| Lancashire | 2.0 |
| Yorkshire and east Midlands | 0.8 |
| West Midlands | 1.0 |
| North east | 1.0 |
| South west | 1.0 |
| Total | 15.5 |

The GMSF's budget application for 1995–96 includes a forecast of £68,816 for rent. Information on the amount of rent paid for each office, and to whom the rent is paid is a matter for the Foundation and the relevant landlords.

The GMSF local office in Swansea is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the cost of running the Grant Maintained Schools Foundation in 1994–95; and what is the level of grant provision for 1995–96. [22456]

**Mr. Robin Squire:** The Department paid grant of £695,000 to the Grant Maintained Schools Foundation Ltd. in 1994–95. Grant to a maximum of £815,000 is available for the current financial year.

### History Curriculum

**Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what changes in the history curriculum of schools she plans to make to ensure that children have an understanding of the background to, and the conduct of, the second world war; and if she will make a statement. [22438]

**Mr. Forth:** The second world war will continue to occupy a prominent role within the national curriculum for history, as it has always done. Under the new history curriculum, which will be taught in schools from next September, all 11 to 14-year-olds in maintained schools will have to be taught about the second world war and its legacy for Britain and the world. The choice of teaching materials is a matter for individual schools and teachers.

### Proposed Primary School, Liverpool

**Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education when she expects to announce a decision on the proposal to build a Christian primary school in Croxteth, Liverpool; and if she will make a statement. [22441]

**Mr. Robin Squire:** My right hon. Friend hopes to make a decision on these proposals shortly.

### Independent Schools

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many non-United Kingdom nationals were enrolled in independent schools in Britain *(a)* in total and *(b)* as a percentage of the independent school population (i) in 1980 and (ii) currently. [2453]

**Mr. Robin Squire:** The Department does not collect details of the nationality of pupils enrolled in independent schools. The annual census carried out by the independent schools information service, published on 25 April, found that nearly 6,800 foreign pupils enrolled last year in United Kingdom independent boarding schools.

### Funding Agency for Schools

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the cost of running the Funding Agency for Schools in 1994–95; and what is the level of provision for 1995–96. [22454]

**Mr. Robin Squire:** Total grant paid to the agency in the financial year 1994–95 for its running costs—revenue and capital expenditure—was £10.927 million. Estimates provision for 1995–96 is £11.5 million.

### Expenditure, Cumbria

**Dr. John Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment she has made of the effect on education in west Cumbria of the recent reductions in the education budget. [22741]

**Mr. Robin Squire:** It is for Cumbria county council to determine how much of its overall budget is allocated to education and how much to other services.

### Schools, Ealing

**Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how much is currently spent per pupil in *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools in Ealing by (i) school governors under delegated local management of schools budgets and by (ii) the Ealing education committee in terms of its own administrative organisations; and if she will make a statement. [22207]

**Mr. Robin Squire:** The figures are derived from the budget statement for 1995–96 published by the Ealing LEA under section 42 of the Education Reform Act 1988, in respect of expenditure on schools covered by its scheme for the local management of schools. The figures in the right-hand column relate to planned expenditure by the LEA under the head "management and administration".

*£ per pupil*

| *Sector* | *Allocated to schools* | *Management and Administration* |
|---|---|---|
| Primary | 1,729.63 | 56.39 |
| Secondary | 2,208.21 | 56.19 |

## DEFENCE

### Equal Opportunities

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made within his Department on equal opportunities matters. [21537]

**Mr. Soames:** A statement about progress on equal opportunities for my Department's civilian staff and Service personnel was published in the Ministry of Defence 1995 departmental report, Cm 2801, a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House.

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress he hopes to achieve in his Department over the next three months to push forward the declaration signed in October 1994 at the Vienna conference in preparation for the fourth UN conference on women; and if he will agree to incorporate a section on equal opportunities in his Department's annual report. [21539]

**Mr. Soames:** The Government are committed to the principles set out in the regional platform for action agreed at the preparatory conference in Vienna for the fourth UN world conference on women. Where appropriate, my Department has taken these forward through a wide range of programmes and initiatives related to service and civilian employees, and will continue to do so. A section on progress made on equal opportunities matters in my Department is incorporated annually in the departmental report, a copy of which is placed in the Library of the House.

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish the gender assessment being prepared by his Department. [21538]

**Mr. Soames:** My Department's policy for both civilian and service personnel, in line with guidance issued in 1992 by the ministerial group on women's issues, is that policy proposals should ensure that unlawful or unjustifiable sex or race discrimination does not occur.

For civilian personnel, similar principles apply in respect of people with disabilities. This scrutiny is part of a continuous and routine process, as part of policy advice to Ministers and is included in my Department's policy on equal opportunities.

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which Minister in his Department has responsibility for equal opportunities issues. [21536]

**Mr. Soames:** Responsibility for these issues is shared between myself and my noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence.

### Naval Gunfire

**Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many incidents in the last 10 years in training exercises on the south coast there have been of naval gunfire landing where it was not supposed to. [21444]

**Mr. Soames:** There have been no recorded incidents in the period in question.

**Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the estimated extra cost of using helicopters for the spotters, at the proposed naval firing range at Dodman point, Cornwall, per annum. [22059]

**Mr. Soames:** Observation from helicopters during naval gunfire support would mostly be undertaken by the firing ship's own helicopter, in a dual role of range safety and fall of shot observation. There would, therefore, be no additional cost. However, for those Royal Navy ships which do not have their own helicopter, which we estimate to be approximately one fifth of the 70 or so firing serials each year, the cost to the Royal Navy would be in the region of £3,000 per two-hour serial. This would, however, be substantially less than the cost of continuing NGS training at Lulworth cove.

**Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if his Department will review the effectiveness and cost of the use of Dodman point for the proposed naval firing range after it has come into use. [22061]

**Mr. Soames:** Yes. The efficacy and cost-effectiveness of all aspects of naval training are kept under constant review.

**Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if his Department have assessed which other areas along the coast other than Dodman point which might be suitable for the proposed naval firing range. [22060]

**Mr. Soames:** The whole of the south coast area, from Start point to the Lizard, was considered in broad terms, and within this a number of specific sites were considered in details. Of these, only the site off Dodman point met the specific criteria required for naval gunfire support training. The viability of continuing training at Lulworth was also considered carefully, but would prove too costly in terms of both fuel consumption and manpower availability.

### Low Flying

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many interviews of people complaining of low flying have been conducted by the RAF police in the latest 12-month period for which figures are available. [21985]

**Mr. Soames:** Of the RAF police investigations into military aircraft activity initiated in 1994, 339 will have involved interviews with at least one complainant, and in some cases more than one. Statistics are not kept in such a way as to identify the precise number of complainants interviewed.

### Portland Naval Base

**Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the criteria used for determining the successful bid in relation to the role of the Portland naval base; and if he will make a statement. [22547]

**Mr. Soames:** The criteria used to select the successful purchaser for Portland naval base were complex. A number of bids were shortlisted and then evaluated by the marketing agents, specialist advisors and officials. There was wide consultation at local level with various agencies including the borough and county councils, South Dorset Economic Partnership and the trade unions at the naval base.

The party finally selected was the one with the best proven track record to date, with viable commercial proposals that had financial backing, the best prospect of providing jobs and the best chance of obtaining planning permission for the proposed uses. The purchaser, Portland Port Ltd., has a strong management team and the resources to call on several marine oriented companies in the UK elsewhere. I believe that the company offers the best long-term solution for local people and reuse of the naval base.

### Rosyth

**Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the nature of the contract on subcontract work undertaken at Rosyth by *(a)* KS Asbestos Removal Ltd. and *(b)* a company or partnership connected to Brooks; and what assessment he has made as to whether (i) the contract was obtained by means of a competitive tender, (ii) the lowest tenderer obtained the work, (iii) the work was actually carried out and completed satisfactorily and (iv) the company or its directors are eligible to obtain future work. [21572]

**Mr. Freeman:** Inquiries have failed to identify any ship work or works services contracts or payments to either KS Asbestos Removal Ltd. or Brooks Ltd. for work at Rosyth. Additional details will be required to enable further investigation.

### Arms Export

**Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) under which military list specifications, as specified in group 1 of part III of schedule 1 to SI 1992 No. 3092 goods for export to *(a)* Taiwan, *(b)* Turkey, *(c)* the United States of America and *(d)* Yugoslavia were refused export licences in 1993; [20572]

(2) under which military list specifications, as specified in group 1 of part III of schedule 1 to SI 1992 No. 3092 goods for export to *(a)* India, *(b)* Iran, *(c)* Israel, *(d)* South Korea, *(e)* Libya, *(f)* Mozambique, *(g)* Oman, *(h)* Pakistan, *(i)* South Africa, *(j)* Sierra

Leone, *(k)* Singapore *(l)* Slovenia and *(m)* Syria were refused export licences in 1993. [20573]

**Mr. Ian Taylor:** I have been asked to reply.

The military list classifications of the goods in question are set out.

| | *ML classification* |
|---|---|
| India | 5, 6, 15 |
| Iran | 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 15, 24 |
| Israel | 1, 3, 4, 6, 10, 11, 15, 16, 18 |
| Korea (South) | 11 |
| Libya | 3 |
| Mozambique | 15 |
| Oman | 1 |
| Pakistan | 4, 15 |
| Sierra Leone | 1 |
| Singapore | 15 |
| Slovenia | 11 |
| South Africa | 10, 11, 16, 17 |
| Syria | 4, 7 |
| Taiwan | 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15 |
| Turkey | 4 |
| USA | 11 |
| Yugoslavia | 17 |

### VE Day Commemoration

**Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence who will be representing the parts of the former Soviet Union and the former Yugoslavia at Her Majesty's Government's official celebrations of the 50th anniversary of VE day. [22629]

**Mr. Goodlad:** I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave my right hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) on 28 April 1995, *Official Report*, columns *743–45*.

## HOME DEPARTMENT

### Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme

**Mr. Mike O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if cases which have had an award provisionally decided under the new tariff-based criminal injuries compensation scheme will now be automatically reviewed under the old scheme and have their appropriate level of compensation determined under the old scheme; [21728]

(2) if cases rejected under the eligibility rules for the criminal injuries compensation tariff scheme will be reassessed following the recent court decision as if they had been submitted under the old criminal injuries compensation scheme; and if any applicant who would have been rejected under the tariff scheme will be approached directly by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority to seek from them any additional information required to determine eligibility under the old scheme. [21727]

**Mr. Maclean::** Yes.

**Mr. Mike O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) when the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board will notify applicants of any additional information required if they are to have their applications determined under the old scheme rather than the tariff scheme; [21725]

(2) in what circumstances applicants have to make a new application for a review of the award granted under the tariff scheme. [21729]

**Mr. Maclean:** I understand that the board has already written to every applicant or representative to tell them that their cases will now be decided under the terms of the old, 1990 scheme. The letters made it clear that where further information was required by the board for such assessment, it would be in touch with the addressees again. I further understand any such approaches will be made as soon as possible.

**Mr. Mike O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if applications now to be submitted to the CICA/CICB should be submitted using the old application form or the new application form based upon the tariff scheme. [21721]

**Mr. Maclean:** I understand from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board that new applications should be completed on the 1990 scheme forms. Extra stocks of these have been ordered for distribution around the usual networks. Some supplementary application forms are also being printed, in order to enable those who have already completed a tariff scheme application to provide all the additional information required for assessment under the 1990 scheme.

**Mr. Mike O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to introduce new legislation to deal with criminal injuries compensation; and to what extent recipients of current criminal injuries compensation are safeguard against retrospective elements in future legislation abating their awards. [21723]

**Mr. Maclean:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche) on 26 April, column *561*.

**Mr. Mike O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if cases rejected as out of time under the new criminal injuries compensation tariff scheme but which would have been in time under the old criminal injuries compensation scheme will now be re-opened; and if it will be necessary for applicants rejected under the new time limit on the tariff scheme to resubmit their applications. [21726]

**Mr. Maclean:** I understand that the chairman of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board will be considering personally all "out of time" applications rejected under the former tariff scheme. It will not be necessary for applications to be re-submitted, and the chairman's decisions will be notified to applicants as soon as practicable.

**Mr. Mike O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will now reinstate CICB members who were given notice of termination to deal with reassessments of cases which have now become necessary following the court decision on the tariff-based criminal injuries compensation scheme; and what assessment he has made of the impact of staffing levels on the time taken to determine applications. [21722]

**Mr. Maclean:** All board members who had not already stated a wish to stand down had already been offered reappointment to 31 March 1996, before the judgment of the Judicial Committee of the House of Lords. Invitations to join the board had also been extended to potential new members to keep the board at or near full strength. Present plans envisage an increase in support staff from 450 to 480 in the current financial year, but the position will be kept under review.

**Mr. Mike O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cases submitted under the criminal injuries compensation tariff scheme have not yet been decided; and if they will be decided under the pre-tariff scheme or under the tariff scheme. [21724]

**Mr. Maclean:** Some 72,000 applications were received under the tariff scheme. They will all be assessed or reassessed under the reinstated, 1990, scheme.

**Mr. Mike O' Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in cases where criminal injuries compensation would have been greater under the new scheme than under the old scheme, if applicants will receive less than the Home Secretary and the CICA have provisionally awarded to those applicants; and how many people are affected in each category of compensation. [21720]

**Mr. Maclean:** My right hon. and learned Friend has no direct responsibility for the assessment or award of compensation to individual applicants under the criminal injuries scheme.

Where any award reassessed under the 1990 scheme is lower than the tariff award, the latter will stand. It will not be known how many people fall into that category until all the tariff awards have been reassessed.

**Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what proportion of *(a)* nurses, *(b)* firefighters, *(c)* shopworkers and *(d)* police officers awarded compensation under the criminal injuries compensation scheme were women; [22308]

(2) how many shopworkers *(a)* in London and *(b)* in England and Wales have been awarded criminal injuries compensation awards under the new tariff scheme; how many of those awards were less than they would have received under the old scheme; and what was the average amount by which each claimant received a reduced amount. [22309]

**Mr. Maclean:** Information about awards made to occupational groups under the 1990 scheme is not recorded centrally. It is not therefore possible to make the comparisons required. For awards made under the tariff scheme the proportion of awards made to women was as follows:

| | *Per cent.* |
|---|---|
| Medical personnel | 67 |
| Firefighter | 0 |
| Police | 8 |

The term "medical personnel" includes doctors and nursing grades.

**Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many *(a)* firefighters, *(b)* police officers and *(c)* nurses (i) in London and (ii) in England and Wales were awarded criminal injuries compensation under the tariff scheme. [22310]

**Mr. Maclean** *[holding answer 3 May 1995]:* The following tariff awards have been made:

| *Occupational group* | *London* | *England and Wales (including London)* |
|---|---|---|
| Police | 30 | 182 |
| Firefighter | 1 | 10 |
| Medical personnel | 9 | 51 |

The term medical personnel includes doctors and nursing grades. No further breakdown is readily available.

**Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide a breakdown by gender of those awarded criminal injuries compensation under the tariff scheme. [22307]

**Mr. Maclean** *[holding answer 3 May 1995]:* Some 3,332 awards have been made to male victims and 1,774 to female victims. Further awards may be made since all offers of award outstanding at the date of the tariff scheme's withdrawal on 5 April will be honoured if the offers are accepted by claimants. The applications will then be reassessed by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board under the reinstated, 1990, scheme in the usual way.

### International Wildlife Crime

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will describe the areas of work currently being undertaken by the Interpol sub-group of wildlife crime. [21832]

**Mr. Maclean:** I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave him on the 29 March at column *674*.

### Greater Manchester Police

**Ms Abbott:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will institute an inquiry into the Greater Manchester police in respect of the charity dinner held on 25 April; and if he will make a statement. [21810]

**Mr. Maclean:** I believe that the event to which the hon. Member refers took place on 10 March. This is a matter for the chief constable of Greater Manchester.

### Firearms

**Mr. Mike O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are his policies for *(a)* limiting the ease of use of stolen shotguns and *(b)* requiring them to be fitted with barrel locks when being stored. [22098]

**Mr. Maclean:** The primary purpose of the existing controls on firearms and shotguns is public safety. The firearms rules 1989 require all shotgun certificate holders to store their guns securely so as to prevent, as far as is reasonably practicable, unauthorised access and to take all reasonable precautions to prevent theft during transit. Appropriate security arrangements will depend upon the individual circumstances in each case. Home Office guidance on security suggests that barrel blocks may provide extra security but should never be used instead of

a locked gun cabinet or other similarly secure container. The Firearms Consultative Committee, the independent body which advises my right hon. and learned Friend on firearms matters, recommended in its fourth annual report, 1992–93 that barrel block devices should not be made mandatory and there are no plans to do so.

**Mr. Mike O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many shotguns have been stolen from authorised firearm keepers in each of the last five years. [22097]

**Mr. Maclean:** The available information relates to the number of incidents in which shotguns were stolen in England and Wales. The following table gives the figures for the years 1989–1993.

*Notifiable offences of burglary or theft recorded by the police in which shotguns were reported to have been stolen*

| | *Number* |
|---|---|
| 1989 | 495 |
| 1990 | 479 |
| 1991 | 574 |
| 1992 | 570 |
| 1993 | 594 |

### Telephones

**Sir Terence Higgins:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what powers exist to prosecute those who clone portable telephones and use the numbers belonging to others to make telephone calls; and if he will make a statement. [21806]

**Mr. Maclean:** Under section 42 of the Telecommunications Act 1984, it is an offence to use a cloned portable telephone. If it can be shown that the telephone was stolen from its owner it may be possible, subject to the evidence, to prosecute the user for handling stolen goods contrary to section 22 of the Theft Act 1968. There is no legislation which prohibits the actual cloning of a portable telephone.

### Electoral Voting

**Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what plans the Government have to review the format of the absent voter forms to prevent fraud by misappropriation of proxy votes; what systems are in place to monitor the number of people claiming proxy votes in elections; and if he will make a statement; [22289]

(2) what steps are being taken to monitor the exercising of proxy votes in the local government elections; [22288]

(3) if he will consider the collection of statistics on the use of proxy votes. [22286]

**Mr. Nicholas Baker:** Absent voting application forms have been amended to ensure that electors indicate clearly whether they are applying to vote by post or proxy, and to ensure that all appointments of a proxy are signed by the elector. These amendments help to prevent fraud. The number of proxies appointed to vote was collated for the first time at the 1994 European parliamentary elections and similar statistics will be collated at the next general election. Figures relating to proxy voting at local government elections are not collected centrally.

**Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans the Government have to increase the penalties for electoral fraud where the offence involves the deprivation of a vulnerable elector of his or her vote. [22290]

**Mr. Nicholas Baker:** None.

**Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will consider the use in elections of travelling ballot boxes which can be taken to hospitals and residential homes where there are more than 10 residents. [22287]

**Mr. Nicholas Baker:** There are no plans to do so.

### Police Powers

**Mr. Waller:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy that the power to require the drivers of moving vehicles to stop should be confined to the police. [22339]

**Mr. Maclean:** The Government have no plans to change the law in this regard.

### Wandsworth Prison

**Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement as to the procedures that are now followed at Wandsworth prison in respect of inmates suspected of being a possible suicide risk. [22375]

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

*Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Tom Cox, dated 4 May 1995:*

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the procedures that are now being followed at Wandsworth prison for any inmates suspected of being a possible suicide risk.

Mr. Butler, the Director of Personnel, wrote to you on 21 March in my absence, outlining the existing procedures at Wandsworth prison in respect of an inmate regarded as a possible suicide risk. The procedures which are followed at Wandsworth have not altered since Mr. Butler's letter.

### Live Animal Exports Protests (Costs)

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what are the estimated additional *(a)* daily costs and *(b)* total costs to date incurred by the Essex police as a consequence of the live animal exports protests at Brightlingsea; and if he will make a statement; [22195]

(2) if he will reimburse wholly or in part the additional costs incurred by the Essex police as a consequence of the live animal exports protests at Brightlingsea; and if he will make a statement. [22196]

**Mr. Maclean:** I understand from the chief constable that the average additional daily cost for the period to 15 April is estimated to be £19,580. The estimated total additional cost for the same period is £1,840,514.

The Home Office will reimburse 51 per cent. of the police expenditure incurred at Brightlingsea prior to 1 April 1995. After that date police grant is paid as a cash-limited sum and contributes to the cost of all police operations.

### Police (Firearms Deaths and Injuries)

**Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many police officers have been *(a)* injured and *(b)* killed by firearms in (i) the Metropolitan police area and (ii) England and Wales in each of the last 10 years; [21893]

(2) how many working hours were lost by police officers in *(a)* London and *(b)* England and Wales arising from injuries by firearms in each of the last 10 years. [21897]

**Mr. Maclean:** The following table gives the information available to me which relates to the years 1988 to 1993. Information for earlier years is not available. Full information for 1994 is not yet available, but no police officer was killed by a firearm in that year.

*Notifiable offences recorded by the police in which a police officer on duty was killed or injured by a firearm in England and Wales*

| | *Metropolitan police* | | *England and Wales* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Injured* | *Killed* | *Injured* | *Killed* |
| 1988 | 4 | — | 9 | 2 |
| 1989 | 8 | — | 10 | 1 |
| 1990 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 1 |
| 1991 | 4 | — | 7 | — |
| 1992 | 3 | — | 9 | [1] |
| 1993 | 1 | 1 | 9 | 1 |

[1] Special constable.

The information requested on the number of working hours which were lost through injuries caused by firearms is not held centrally.

### Mr. Raghbir Singh Johal

**Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 1 May, *Official Report,* column *95.* regarding correspondence over Mr. Raghbir Singh Johal, what is the average time taken for replies to be sent to members of the public over this case. [22597]

**Mr. Nicholas Baker:** Fifteen working days.

**Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if all information requested by the solicitors representing Mr. Raghbir Singh Johal has been supplied by his Department. [22542]

**Mr. Nicholas Baker:** Mr. Singh's solicitors have been provided with all the information requested, as far as is consistent with the interests of national security.

**Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what requests he has had to meet representatives of the Sikh community over the case of Mr. Raghbir Singh Johal; and what reply he has made. [22543]

**Mr. Nicholas Baker:** There have been two requests. No reply has yet been given.

### Elections (EU Voters)

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what representations he has received about the requirement, under the arrangements outlined in the circular RPA 394, for EU citizens resident in the United Kingdom to apply if they wish to register as European parliamentary electors; what arrangements apply to their registration in respect of local government elections; and if he will make a statement; [22632]

(2) when he proposes to bring forward legislation enabling arrangements to be made allowing European Union citizens resident in the United Kingdom to be included as local government electors on the register coming into force in February 1996; what is the latest estimate of the numbers of such EU citizens who may be included on the register throughout the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement. [22587]

**Mr. Nicholas Baker:** The treaty of European Union gave all nationals of the Union resident in a member state of which they are not nationals the right to vote and stand as a candidate in European parliamentary and local government elections. European citizens were eligible to vote and to stand as candidates in the European Parliament elections last year.

No formal representations have been received on circular RPA 394 on EU citizens resident in the UK wishing to register as electors.

Legislation to provide for registration of Union citizens as electors in future local elections will be presented to Parliament as parliamentary time allows. There are about 400,000 eligible EU citizens in the UK.

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many EU citizens, resident in the United Kingdom, included on the register of those eligible to vote in the local elections on 4 May, were declared ineligible to vote before polling day. [22586]

**Mr. Nicholas Baker:** EU citizens, other than British and Irish citizens, were not eligible to vote in the elections on 4 May.

### War Crimes Unit

**Mr. Cyril Townsend:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers by rank, have been working in the war crimes unit in New Scotland yard, since 31 March; and what is the expected cost of the maintenance of this unit. [22595]

**Mr. Maclean:** Six police officers have been working in the war crimes unit since 31 March: two detective inspectors, one detective sergeant and three detective constables. The cost to the Metropolitan police of running this unit is approximately £77,000 per month.

### North Tyneside Council (Criminal Allegations)

**Mr. Trotter:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many inquiries the police have conducted into the activities of organised criminals in connection with the Labour party in north Tyneside within the last year; and if he will make a statement. [22631]

**Mr. Maclean:** Investigation into the activities of organised criminals in north Tyneside is a matter for the chief constable of Northumbria police. I am told, though, that the police are at present conducting a preliminary inquiry into certain allegations connected with the North Tyneside council.

### Deportation (National Security)

**Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cases of notice of decision to deport on grounds of national security have gone to the appeals panel in the last five years; and on what number of such cases the panel has differed from his own decision. [22541]

**Mr. Nicholas Baker:** The independent advisory panel has considered representations in 54 cases in the last five years, all but three at the time of the Gulf war. The panel's advice is confidential.

### Safer Cities Projects, Cardiff and Rhyl

**Sir Ivan Lawrence:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on when the safer cities projects in Cardiff and Rhyl will be established. [23136]

**Mr. Maclean:** I am pleased to announce that, following a tender competition, contractors have been selected to manage the two safer cities projects which I announced on 2 December 1994.

After careful evaluation of the tenders, Crime Concern has been chosen to manage the project at Cardiff, and the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders will manage the project at Rhyl.

Both organisations have significant experience in crime prevention, project management and working with voluntary agencies. We expect preliminary work to begin shortly, and the projects will come on stream in the summer.

### Endangered Bird Species (Sales)

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to the Secretary of State for the Environment's answers of 3 March, *Official Report*, columns *757-58*, and 22 March, *Official Report*, column *201*, how many police forces monitor trade journals for sales of birds listed in the convention on international trade in endangered species. [21878]

**Mr. Maclean** *[holding answer 2 May 1995]:* This is an operational matter for chief officers of police and is not recorded centrally.

### Market Testing

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will estimate the cost of employing consultants in connection with market testing programmes in which his Department has been engaged since their inception. [21370]

**Mr. Michael Forsyth** *[holding answer 1 May 1995]:* From 1 April 1992 and 31 march 1995, expenditure on external consultancies in respect of the "Competing for Quality" programme is estimated to have been approximately £855,000 by the Prison Service and approximately £910,000 by the rest of the Home Office.

The estimated annual savings figures so far as a result of the "Competing for Quality" programmes since April 1992 are £19 million for the Prison Service and £11 million for the rest of the Home Office.

### England v. Ireland Football Match

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will arrange the inquiry reports, by *(a)* the Irish Football Association, *(b)* Judge Finlay, *(c)* the Irish police and *(d)* all other relevant reports by English and Irish authorities into public disorder at the England v. Ireland football match in Dublin in February, to be placed in the Library; if he will list the main recommendations for action contained in these reports; and if he will make a statement. [22327]

**Mr. Maclean** *[holding answer 2 May 1995]:* I understand that a copy of the report "Violence at Lansdowne Road" by Mr. Justice Thomas Finlay will be available shortly in the Library. It is for the relevant Irish authorities to decide whether to make their other corresponding reports publicly available. In respect of the report of the English Football Association I refer the hon. member to my written answer of 22 March, *Official Report*, column *199*.

### Prisoners (Police Cells)

**Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners are currently in police cells *(a)* in each police station in England and Wales and *(b)* in each division of the Metropolitan police; and how many there were in *(a)* and *(b)*, (i) one year ago, (ii) five years ago, (iii) 10 years ago and (iv) 15 years ago. [21608]

**Mr. Michael Forsyth** *[holding answer 1 May 1995]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

*Letter from Derek Lewis to Mrs. Barbara Roche, dated 4 May 1995:*

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the number of prisoners currently held in police cells in each police station in England and Wales; in each division of the Metropolitan Police and the number held one year aged, 5 years ago, 10 years ago and 15 years ago.

The information you requested is not recorded centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Police forces are only required to provide the Prison Service with daily returns showing the total number of prisoners being held in police cells. Over the last 18 months the use of police cells has been confined to the north of England. The information about the number of prisoners held in police cells submitted by the police forces concerned over the last 18 months is contained in the attached table.

*Location of prisoners held in police cells on 25 April 1994 and 25 April 1995*

| *Police station* | *Number of prisoners* |
|---|---|
| *25 April 1994* | |
| *Greater Manchester* | |
| Central Detention Centre | 28 |
| Collyhurst | 5 |
| Crescent | 4 |
| Mottram | 7 |
| Astley Bridge | 7 |
| Bolton | 15 |
| Ashton I M | 2 |
| Wigan | 11 |
| Stretford | 12 |
| Trafford | 12 |
| Bury | 7 |

*Location of prisoners held in police cells on 25 April 1994 and 25 April 1995*

| *Police station* | *Number of prisoners* |
|---|---|
| Littleborough | 11 |
| Rochdale | 72 |
| Oldham | 8 |
| *Merseyside* | |
| Main Bridewell | 41 |
| Crosby | 12 |
| Kirkby | 12 |
| Stanley Road | 12 |
| St. Helens | 11 |
| *Lancashire* | |
| Blackpool | 8 |
| Preston | 9 |
| *West Yorkshire* | |
| Eccleshill | 10 |
| Toller Lane | 13 |
| *South Yorkshire* | |
| Bridge Street | 8 |
| *Northumbria* | |
| Gillbridge Avenue | 16 |
| *25 April 1995* | |
| *Greater Manchester* | |
| Central Detention Centre | 50 |
| Bootle Street | 6 |
| Collyhurst | 5 |
| Platt Lane | 4 |
| Crescent | 6 |
| Mottram | 5 |
| Astley Bridge | 5 |
| Bolton | 5 |
| Leigh | 7 |
| Wigan | 15 |
| Stretford | 10 |
| Trafford | 14 |
| Bury | 7 |
| Whitefield | 4 |
| Littleborough | 6 |
| Middleton | 5 |
| Rochdale | 9 |
| *Merseyside* | |
| Kirkby | 8 |
| Crosby | 8 |
| St. Helens | 10 |
| Wallasey | 8 |
| *Lancashire* | |
| Morecambe | 8 |
| Blackpool | 18 |
| Preston | 18 |
| Skelmersdale | 6 |
| *West Yorkshire* | |
| Halifax | 7 |
| Huddersfield | 12 |
| Eccleshill | 12 |
| Toller Lane | 15 |
| Leeds | 18 |
| *Cheshire* | |
| Congleton | 7 |
| Wilmslow | 2 |
| Crewe | 6 |

**Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide a breakdown of the cost of keeping a prisoner in a police cell, giving the proportion of the total spent on police officers. [21709]

**Mr. Michael Forsyth** *[holding answer 1 May 1995]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

*Letter from Derek Lewis to Mrs. Barbara Roche, dated 4 May 1995:*

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the breakdown of the cost of keeping a prisoner in a police cell.

The average cost per night of keeping a prisoner in a police cell in 1994 was £250. A breakdown of this figure is given below:

| | £ |
|---|---|
| Police officer costs | 197 |
| Civilian staff costs | 8 |
| Police support costs (travelling and subsistence) | 16 |
| Prisoner support costs (food, laundry, medical) | 13 |
| Administrative costs | 12 |
| Other costs (including nominal accommodation charge and prisoners' recreation | 4 |

## Closed Circuit Television

**Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department who took the decision that CCTV bids in *(a)* Folkestone and Hythe and *(b)* Penrith and the Borders should be successful in receiving Government funding over the challenge scheme. [22312]

**Mr. Maclean** *[holding answer 3 May 1995]:* I decided on all bids under the CCTV challenge scheme on the basis of recommendations made by an assessment panel of Home Office officials and consultants seconded to the Home Office.

## Road Accidents (Police Vehicles)

**Ms Jowell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many road traffic accidents involving police patrol vehicles were reported in each police force area in England and Wales for each year since 1991; and how many *(a)* police officers and *(b)* civilians sustained injuries as a result. [21029]

**Mr. Maclean** *[holding answer 3 May 1995]:* The latest information which is available centrally on the total number of police vehicle accidents in 1991–93 is shown in the following table. The information on injuries relates to those where death or serious injury has arisen in the course of either police pursuits or responses to emergency calls.

| Force name | Total police vehicle accidents 1991 | 1992 | 1993 | Police fatal injury 1991 | 1992 | 1993 | Police serious injury 1991 | 1992 | 1993 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Avon and Somerset | 577 | 505 | 672 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 11 |
| Bedfordshire | 144 | 107 | 108 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 0 |
| Cambridgeshire | 170 | 91 | 111 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| Cheshire | 194 | 194 | 218 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Cleveland | 271 | 261 | 253 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Cumbria | 139 | 140 | 141 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Derbyshire | 170 | 239 | 237 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Devon and Cornwall | 711 | 620 | 474 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Dorset | 211 | 134 | 182 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| Durham | 221 | 160 | 234 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Essex | 81 | 415 | 281 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Gloucestershire | 144 | 170 | 184 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 2 |
| Greater Manchester | 885 | 885 | 937 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 4 |
| Hampshire | 439 | 401 | 469 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Hertfordshire | 185 | 253 | 247 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 5 |
| Humberside | 211 | 255 | 237 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Kent | 422 | 439 | 655 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 1 |
| Lancashire | 354 | 354 | 357 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| Leicestershire | 231 | 253 | 284 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 0 |
| Lincolnshire | 83 | 75 | 67 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| City of London | 60 | 78 | 80 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Merseyside | 528 | 590 | 442 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 7 |
| Norfolk | 229 | 181 | 196 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Northamptonshire | 194 | 183 | 196 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Northumbria | 700 | 1,089 | 938 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 0 |
| North Yorkshire | 160 | 191 | 172 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 5 | 2 |
| Nottinghamshire | 304 | 316 | 333 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| South Yorkshire | 298 | 289 | 326 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 6 |
| Staffordshire | 470 | 336 | 315 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 1 |
| Suffolk | 159 | 144 | 135 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Surrey | 192 | 183 | 168 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Sussex | 296 | 345 | 296 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 3 |
| Thames Valley | 738 | 709 | 837 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 2 |
| Warwickshire | 253 | 261 | 158 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| West Mercia | 219 | 210 | 242 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| West Midlands | 847 | 910 | 987 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 9 | 5 | 0 |
| West Yorkshire | 993 | 663 | 870 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Wiltshire | 96 | 114 | 127 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Dyfed Powys | 77 | 99 | 116 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Gwent | 89 | 165 | 122 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| North Wales | 148 | 142 | 158 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| South Wales | 434 | 992 | 371 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 7 | 3 |
| Metropolitan police | 5,118 | 5,419 | 5,561 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 41 | 56 | 51 |
| Total | 18,445 | 19,560 | 19,504 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 101 | 112 | 113 |

| Force name | Civilian fatal injury 1991 | 1992 | 1993 | Civilian serious injury 1991 | 1992 | 1993 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Avon and Somerset | 1 | 4 | 2 | 5 | 11 | 5 |
| Bedfordshire | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Cambridgeshire | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 3 |
| Cheshire | 0 | 1 | 0 | 5 | 6 | 3 |
| Cleveland | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 0 |
| Cumbria | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 1 |
| Derbyshire | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Devon and Cornwall | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Dorset | 0 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 3 |
| Durham | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Essex | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 |
| Gloucestershire | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Greater Manchester | 3 | 3 | 1 | 15 | 4 | 41 |
| Hampshire | 0 | 1 | 0 | 7 | 0 | 2 |
| Hertfordshire | 0 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 4 | 2 |
| Humberside | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 6 |
| Kent | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| Lancashire | 4 | 1 | 0 | 7 | 2 | 4 |
| Leicestershire | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 12 | 2 |
| Lincolnshire | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| City of London | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 1 |
| Merseyside | 4 | 0 | 1 | 26 | 21 | 4 |

| Force name | Civilian fatal injury 1991 | 1992 | 1993 | Civilian serious injury 1991 | 1992 | 1993 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Norfolk | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| Northamptonshire | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Northumbria | 3 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 10 |
| North Yorkshire | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 5 | 7 |
| Nottinghamshire | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 0 |
| South Yorkshire | 1 | 1 | 0 | 9 | 10 | 4 |
| Staffordshire | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Suffolk | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 8 |
| Surrey | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| Sussex | 0 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 5 | 6 |
| Thames Valley | 1 | 1 | 1 | 6 | 5 | 11 |
| Warwickshire | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| West Mercia | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| West Midlands | 1 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| West Yorkshire | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| Wiltshire | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Dyfed-Powys | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Gwent | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| North Wales | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| South Wales | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 12 | 2 |
| Metropolitan police | 3 | 7 | 10 | 40 | 59 | 45 |
| Total | 30 | 28 | 29 | 170 | 188 | 187 |

### Prisoners (Drug Misuse)

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners received medical treatment in each of the past 10 years *(a)* within prisons or *(b)* transferred to outside hospitals for the symptoms of drug misuse. [22223]

**Mr. Michael Forsyth** *[holding answer 3 May 1995]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

*Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Paul Flynn, dated 4 May 1995:*

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question on how many prisoners received medical treatment in each of the past 10 years *(a)* within prisons or *(b)* transferred to outside hospitals for the symptoms of drug misuse.

The information requested is not recorded centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. All Prison Service establishments provide detoxification, education and counselling facilities to prisoners with drug misuse problems through the health care centre, probation department or community drug agencies.

As part of the new Prison Service drugs strategy, published on 25 April 1995, all prison governors are required to develop and implement local drug strategies which will form part of their contract with their area manager. The local strategies will include provision for education, treatment and throughcare for prisoners who misuse, have misused, or are at risk of misusing drugs.

This year the Prison Service will be greatly expanding the number and types of drug treatment programmes. These programmes include therapeutic communities, 3-month treatment programmes, intensive counselling and education services, detoxification units and community linked throughcare programmes. Careful monitoring and evaluation of these programmes will help to determine the development of drug treatment in other establishments.

## SOCIAL SECURITY

### Equal Opportunities

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what progress he hopes to achieve in his Department over the next three months to push forward the declaration signed in October 1994 at the Vienna conference in preparation for the fourth UN conference on women; and if he will incorporate a section on equal opportunities in his Department's annual report. [21509]

**Mr. Burt:** The Department will reflect, in its wide range of programmes and initiatives, any final commitments on equal opportunities undertaken by the UK Government at the Vienna preparatory conference for the fourth world conference on women and elsewhere.

The Department's 1996 annual report will include appropriate reference to equal opportunities.

### Income Support

**Mr. Mudie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list *(a)* the percentage of cases found in error and *(b)* the estimated financial value of the errors in respect of income support in each year since 1988–89. [21808]

**Mr. Roger Evans:** The administration of income support is a matter for Mr. Ian Magee, the acting chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member.

*Letter from Ian Magee to Mr. George Mudie, dated 3 May 1995:*

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question asking about the accuracy of Income Support and the value of errors since 1988.

The full range of information is not available. Although the Benefits Agency has longstanding procedures to provide information about the accuracy of benefit payments, a mechanism to establish the financial value of errors identified during checks was not put in place until April 1994. This information is not yet available for the full year ending March 1995. The information given in the attached table has been obtained from National Audit Office reports.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

*Extract of results of National Audit Office of income support 1988–89 to 1993–94*

| Year | Cases containing financial error (per cent.) | Total monetary value of errors £ million |
|---|---|---|
| 1988–89 | 13.5 | 160.0 |
| 1989–90 | 14.4 | 219.6 |
| 1990–91 | 13.6 | 344.9 |
| 1991–92 | 16.9 | 411.8 |
| 1992–93 | 16.3 | 715.9 |
| 1993–94 | 16.8 | 681.5 |

**Mr. Alan Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the cost of providing income support to spouses of people whose occupational pensions are contributing to the cost of local authority residential and nursing home care. [22280]

**Mr. Arbuthnot:** The information is not available.

## Pensions (Expatriates)

**Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what agreements exist for the payment of uprated UK pensions to UK expatriates resident in *(a)* Commonwealth, *(b)* EU and *(c)* foreign countries, what were the dates of these agreements; and if he will make a statement on the factors underlying the absence of such agreements with other countries in which numbers of UK expatriates are resident. [21784]

**Mr. Arbuthnot:** The information is in the table.

In order to enter into an agreement with the UK, the other country's social security scheme has to be sufficiently similar to provide reciprocity. Increasingly, there has to be sufficient movement of workers between the two countries to justify the outlay of resources to negotiate, operate and maintain the agreement. Above all, any additional benefit costs have to be affordable.

The great majority of UK pensioners overseas, over 350,000, who do not receive uprated pensions in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa. Although the UK has reciprocal agreements with Australia, Canada and New Zealand, they do not allow for pension increases to be paid. Because of the considerable costs involved, the Government have no plans to revise these three agreements, or to negotiate an agreement with South Africa or any other country, to pay uprated pensions.

*Table of countries where annual pension increases are paid and the dates on which reciprocal social security agreements came into force*

| Country | Date |
|---|---|
| *(a) Commonwealth* | |
| Barbados[1] | 1 April 1992 |
| Bermuda | November 1969 |
| Cyprus | 18 May 1957 |
| Gibraltar | 26 March 1974 |
| Guernsey | 4 April 1966 |
| Isle of Man | 28 October 1948 |
| Jamaica | 1 October 1972 |
| Jersey | 4 April 1966 |
| Malta | 29 October 1956 |
| Mauritius | November 1981 |
| *(b) EU and EEA*[2] | |
| Austria | 1 October 1972 |
| Finland | 1 Feburuary 1984 |

*Table of countries where annual pension increases are paid and the dates on which reciprocal social security agreements came into force*

| Country | Date |
|---|---|
| Germany | 1 August 1961 |
| Iceland | 1 August 1985 |
| Republic of Ireland | 4 April 1966 |
| Norway | 1 April 1991 |
| Portugal | 1 October 1979 |
| Spain | 1 April 1975 |
| Sweden | 1 May 1988 |
| *(c) Foreign* | |
| Israel | 1 November 1957 |
| Philippines | 1 December 1989 |
| Switzerland | 1 June 1954 |
| Turkey | 1 June 1961 |
| U.S.A. | September 1969 |
| Yugoslavia (including the former Republics) | 1 September 1958 |

[1] This agreement fulfils a commitment given to the Government of Barbados in 1974.

[2] Annual pension increases must be paid to British citizens and other nationals of the European Union and the European Economic Area states living in the EU and EEA under the EC regulations on social security for migrant workers—regulation 1408/71. These regulations became binding on the Uk on 1 April 1973 and were extended to the EEA on 1 January 1994. The regulations largely supersede pre-existing reciprocal agreements with those countries. However, some such agreements remain relevant in respect of UK pensioners who are nationals of countries outside the EU and EEA, including the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands. Those agreements only are listed under "EU and EEA".

## Occupational Pensions Regulatory Authority

**Mr. Jim Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what consideration he has given to appointing a representative of pensioners, as stipulated in the Pensions Bill; [21834]

(2) what assessment he has made of the adequacy of his powers to ensure that interested parties are represented in the new authority stipulated in the Pensions Bill *[Lords]*. [21835]

**Mr. Arbuthnot:** This answer is based upon the assumption that both these questions relate to the composition of the board of the new Occupational Pensions Regulatory Authority. There is no stipulation in the Pensions Bill that a representative of pensioners should be appointed to the board. The membership of the board will be drawn from a wide range of interests, following the model adopted for the Occupational Pensions Board which has long enjoyed a reputation for integrity and impartiality.

## Housing Benefit

**Sir Fergus Montgomery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will exclude specialist housing for vulnerable people run by housing associations from comparison with average accommodation when he brings about changes to the housing benefit relations in October 1995. [22265]

**Mr. Roger Evans:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Stockport (Ms Coffey) that on 2 May, *Official Report*, column *165*.

### Weekly Incomes

**Mr. Byers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 4 April, *Official Report*, column *1074*, on weekly income, to which tax year the table refers. [22659]

**Mr. Burt:** Pursuant to the reply by the Under-Secretary of State for Social Security, my hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans), of 4 April, *Official Report*, columns *1074–76*, the table provided shows the tax and benefits position for 1994–95. The original question did not specify the year for which information was required. The reply was therefore provided for the latest year for which all the necessary information was available.

### Water Charges

**Mrs. Jane Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has made to compensate benefit recipients for increases in water bills in excess of the rate of inflation. [22546]

**Mr. Burt:** Variations in the cost of water are reflected in the indices used to uprate benefits.

**Mrs. Jane Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he has made of the proportion of a singe person's income support spent on water rates. [22545]

**Mr. Burt:** The Department does not hold such information. Income support recipients may manage their benefit according to their individual preferences.

### War Widows

**Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his oral statement of 24 April, *Official Report*, column 532, if he will give full details of the calculations made to arrive at his estimate of £40 million in a full year as the costs of the Lords amendment to the Pensions Bill restoring war widows pensions to war widows who were widowed a second time, divorced or legally separated including, with particular reference to (i) the gross costs of this change, (ii) the amount of money saved by consequential non-payment of old age pensions, (iii) the amount of money saved by consequential non-payment of other benefits, listed by benefit and (iv) all assumptions about the net savings made as a result of war widows pension not being disregarded for the purpose of other benefits, including the number of local authorities and the number of war widow pensioners in each authority where minimum or only partial disregard is given. [22660]

**Mr. Arbuthnot:** The available information is in the following table:

| | *£ million* |
|---|---|
| *Gross Cost* | *120* |
| Retirement pension/widow's benefit offset | 50 |
| Income support offset | 10 |
| Housing benefit offset | 20 |
| Council tax benefit offset | 5 |
| Total income-related benefit offset | 30 |
| Net cost | 40 |

*Notes:*

1. Figures are based on restoring war widows pension to an estimated 16,500 former war widows. It is estimated that about 16,500 might gain; 15,000 of whom are estimated to have been widowed again, and 1,500 divorced or legally separated.
2. Figures are provided at 1995–96 prices; rounded to the nearest £5 million, but are estimates rather than being accurate to that degree.
3. Gross figures are based on an average WWP of £140 a week.
4. The estimate assumes that around 40 per cent. of the gross cost of restoring WWP would be offset through consequential non-payment of retirement pension widows benefits, and that around a further 25 per cent. would be offset through reductions in income related benefit expenditure. The income support offset ratio is estimated to be around 10 per cent.; the housing benefit offset at around 15 per cent.; and the council tax benefit offset at around 5 per cent.—rounded to the nearest 5 percentage points, but are estimates rather than being accurate to that degree. Figures may not sum due to rounding.
5. These offset ratios are based on information from the 1991–92 family expenditure surveys, uprated to 1995–96 prices. Due to the uncertainties contained in these estimates, they should be treated as indicating broad orders of magnitude only.
6. No assumptions were made about the war widows pension not being fully disregarded for housing benefit and council tax benefit. Had the law provided for such a disregard, the estimated cost of the Lords amendment to the Pensions Bill would have been greater.

## AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

### Sheep Dip

18. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many claims his Department has received for compensation arising from the use of organophosphorous sheep dip. [20954]

**Mrs. Browning:** None. Any such claims would be entirely a matter for the individual and the company concerned.

### Live Animal Exports

19. **Mr. Dowd:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to obtain further legal advice with regard to taking action on the export of live animals from the United Kingdom. [20955]

**Mrs. Browning:** We have already taken extensive legal advice about the export of live animals. We are considering the new RSPCA legal opinion carefully alongside that advice.

### British Veal

21. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he is taking to increase consumption of British-produced food, with particular reference to veal. [20957]

**Mrs. Browning:** Our marketing grants are helping UK suppliers to meet the needs of customers on both the domestic and export markets. In addition, MAFF Ministers initiated a catering project towards the end of 1993 to provide special encouragement in this sector.

As regards veal in particular, I opened a seminar on 24 February in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which brought together all those with an interest in welfare friendly veal. The Ministry will be funding a demonstration project into veal production, to show the best practices for producing veal under welfare-friendly systems, and to provide economic data.

### Tobacco Regime

22. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the reform of the common agricultural policy tobacco regime. [20958]

**Mr. Waldegrave:** The tobacco regime reforms agreed in 1992 and applicable from the 1993 harvest, were a step in the right direction, in reducing the quantities of tobacco eligible for support, removing the facilities for intervention and export refunds in all but exceptional circumstances and switching production to lower tar, more marketable varieties. However, we do not believe that tobacco production should be subsidised or supported at all and will continue to take every opportunity to curb the regime.

### Agri-environment Schemes

23. **Sir Kenneth Carlisle:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last visited the agri-environment schemes at the Halvergate marshes. [20959]

**Mr. Waldegrave:** I visited the Halvergate marshes within the broads environmentally sensitive area on 5 April this year.

### Quarantine Regulations

24. **Mr. Sutcliffe:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to change the quarantine regulations concerning the entry of animals into the United Kingdom. [20960]

**Mrs. Browning:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. Friend gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Weston-super-mare (Sir J. Wiggin) on 25 January 1995, *Official Report*, column 216.

**Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures will be taken to inspect Spanish fishing boats entering the Irish box area for the first time next year. [20937]

**Mr. Jack:** Spanish vessels operating in the UK's section of the Irish box will be liable to fair and vigorous inspection by the Royal Navy as are all other fishing vessels found within British fishery limits. The resources necessary to ensure effective enforcement will be reviewed in the light of the final agreement on the detailed rules for this fishery.

**Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the estimated cost to date to his Department of the appeal to the European Court regarding the legitimacy of the days at sea restrictions contained in the Sea Fish (Conservation) Act 1992. [20956]

**Mr. Jack:** The legal proceedings in question were initiated by the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations, not the Government. Liability for costs will depend on the outcome of the case. It is not therefore possible to give meaningful figures for the cost to MAFF of defending this action until final judgment.

### Dental Health Warnings

**Dr. Moonie:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to impose dental health warnings on drinks with a high sugar content. [20936]

**Mrs. Browning:** I refer the hon. Member to the oral answer given today to the hon. Member for Cambridge (Mrs. Campbell).

### Export Opportunities

**Mr. Michael Spicer:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how he intends to develop export opportunities for the United Kingdom's food and drink industry. [20951]

**Mr. Jack:** The marketing development scheme introduced last June exists specifically to encourage industry to improve its marketing and export performance. We are also working closely with food export firms and Food From Britain on a plan for vigorous promotion of British food and drink over the next three years. For example, at the international food and drink exhibition in London last week, all the Ministers in this Department demonstrated their full support for British food companies aiming at international markets. We shall continue this support at every opportunity.

### Biodiesel Production

**Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on the present biodiesel production in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* other EU nations and *(c)* the USA. [21867]

**Mr. Jack:** The UK biodiesel industry is at an early stage and there is currently no commercial production of biodiesel in the UK. However, a proportion of oilseeds grown for industrial use on set-aside land in the UK is exported for biodiesel production elsewhere in the European Community.

No official information is available on biodiesel production in other member states or the USA.

### Animal Diseases

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many cases of Epizootic Lymphangitis occurred in each year since 1985. [22180]

**Mrs. Browning:** The last case of Epizootic Lymphangitis recorded in Great Britain was in 1906.

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many cases of paramyxovirus occurred in each year since 1985. [22171]

**Mrs. Browning** *[holding answer 1 May 1995]:* The number of confirmed outbreaks of paramyxovirus reported in England for the years in question is:

1985: 298
1986: 247
1987: 227
1988: 199
1989: 129
1990: 252
1991: 86
1992: 123
1993: 76
1994: 29

### British Beef

**Mrs. Helen Jackson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many beef producers in each country have suffered losses as a result of the failure of British Beef. [22607]

**Mr. Jack:** The information requested is not held by this Department.

### Biocontrol Agents

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his latest evaluation of the research into the use of carnivorous snails and slugs to reduce the use of poisons in gastropod control. [22451]

**Mrs. Browning:** MAFF does not fund research into the use of carnivorous slugs and snails to control gastropods since the prevailing scientific view is that they are unlikely to offer any particular advantages as biocontrol agents except in a limited number of very specific control situations. MAFF is aware of work with carnivorous snails in France to control the snail vector of the liver fluke parasite which can be a problem in commercial watercress beds and on the use of carnivorous snails in Belgium for the control of garden slugs. However, other methods of biocontrol such as the use of nematodes, non-toxic chemical repellents and predatory beetles are considered to offer a greater potential for reducing the use of "poisons" in a wider range of pest control situations. Work on a number of these is supported by MAFF.

As biocontrol agents, carnivorous slugs and snails have a poor record and considerable care needs to be taken to ensure that non-target species will not be predated, particularly if non-indigenous species of carnivorous snails are to be used. The most notable situation in which a carnivorous snail was used to control a gastropod pest proved not only unsuccessful but highly ecologically damaging to a number of indigenous non-pest snail species. Carnivorous snails from Florida were used in an attempt to control the giant African land snail, which had become a pest on a number of Pacific islands. Unfortunately, the carnivorous snails ignored the giant land snails and found the indigenous snail population more to their taste.

### Animal Health and Veterinary Group

**Mr. French:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what conclusions he has drawn from the responses to his consultation document on the review of his Ministry's animal health and veterinary group, and if he will make a statement. [23231]

**Mr. Waldegrave:** In a written reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mr. Booth) on 24 October last, I announced the issue of a consultation document setting out the initial conclusions which I had reached in consultation with my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Wales on the review of the Ministry's animal health and veterinary group.

I am grateful to the many individuals and organisations who responded to the consultation document. My right hon. Friends and I have taken into account the views expressed in reaching the following decisions.

I intend actively to pursue consultations with the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons and other interested bodies on my proposal to make an Order under the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 to permit tuberculin testing to be carried out by suitably qualified lay personnel working under veterinary direction. The use to be made of such a facility will be a matter for further discussion with interested organisations.

I have considered carefully the future of the voluntary livestock health schemes in the light of the comments received. I now intend the Ministry to retain responsibility for the pig health scheme, the deer health scheme, and the poultry health scheme. Fees will need to be increased as necessary to meet the full costs of the schemes, but in view of the current position of the pig industry in this country I will forgo any increase in fees in that sector over the next three years.

A number of industry organisations expressed an interest in taking over the sheep and goat health scheme and I intend to pursue discussions with them with a view to implementing a smooth handover of this scheme, with the exception of the scrapie-free category which meets the export needs for breeding animals and will be retained by the Ministry along with the existing scrapie export register.

Similarly, the EBL-free category of the cattle health scheme will be retained by the Ministry, pending achievement of national EBL-free status. But discussions

will be held with industry groups who have expressed an interest in taking over the other elements of the scheme.

As regards the Ministry's functions for animal welfare, I intend to proceed with my proposal. The number of visits to farms will continue at the same level but should concentrate where there is some reason to believe problems may be found. This should prove more effective than the current system of random visits.

As regards the organisational structure for this area of the Ministry, I recently announced the merger of the veterinary investigation service in England and Wales with the Central Veterinary Laboratory in an enlarged executive agency of the Ministry with effect from 1 October 1995. The agency will be responsible for the continuation in the public sector of the very important disease surveillance work carried out by the VI centres. Diagnostic services will continue to be made available to private veterinary practitioners. While it will be the responsibility of the chief executive, Dr. T. W. Little, to meet demanding targets for the efficient management of the agency, any reduction in the external availability of diagnostic services would be a matter for ministerial consideration.

Following a detailed study of the regional and divisional management structure of the veterinary field service, we intend to streamline this structure by moving from five to three regions and from 28 to 15 divisions in England, from two regions to one, and from seven to five divisions in Scotland, and by retaining one region and moving from four to three divisions in Wales. Although this will involve a concentration of administrative staff, the number of front-line veterinary staff will be maintained and will for the most part continue to be located in their existing offices. The restructuring should be mainly concluded by 1 April 1996. Consequential changes are proposed to the pay and grading of veterinary officers and their divisional heads, reflecting revised levels of responsibility and current circumstances of veterinary recruitment and retention.

Finally, I would like to record my appreciation of the loyalty and commitment shown by Ministry staff affected by the uncertainty necessarily caused by this protracted review. I believe that these decisions, once carried through, will provide a sound basis for continued effective and efficient implementation of the Government's animal health had welfare programme.

### Meat and Hygiene Regulations

**Mr. Steen:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) how many veterinary surgeons are employed in the United Kingdom from *(a)* Spain and *(b)* other EEC countries to advise on and enforce the Meat and Hygiene Regulations and to supervise at abattoirs; [22187]

(2) how many British veterinary surgeon are employed in other EEC countries to advise on and enforce the Meat and Hygiene Regulations and to supervise at abattoirs. [22158]

**Mrs. Browning** *[holding answer 2 May 1995]:* Records are not held centrally of the nationality or country of origin of all the veterinary surgeons employed in the UK at meat premises. However, in Great Britain it is known that the Meat Hygiene Service directly employs two veterinary surgeons with German nationality who transferred to MHS when it took over responsibility for this work from local authorities on 1 April. The MHS also contracts with private veterinary practices for the provision of veterinary supervision at meat premises. As was the case when local authorities were responsible for this work, it is known that a small number of these veterinary practices employ a few veterinary surgeons who are not of British nationality.

We have no information about the numbers of British veterinary surgeons employed in other EEC countries.

### Lawley's Mink Farm (Inspections)

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many inspections of Lawley's mink farm, Brooksbank avenue, Scholemoor, Bradford, have been undertaken by the State Veterinary Service since 21 October 1994. [21169]

**Mrs. Browning** *[holding answer 1 May 1995]:* The premises were visited by the State Veterinary Service on 16 November 1994, when no mink or Arctic fox were found there.

### Hospitality

**Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much was spent on official hospitality by his Department in 1994–95. [21208]

**Mr. Jack** *[holding answer 1 May 1995]:* Some £63,684.81, provisional figure, was spent on official hospitality by the Department, excluding its agencies, during the financial year 1994–95.

The principal items of expenditure included hospitality:

to overseas officials and other visitors including, for example, visitors from EC organisations and from other member states;

to industry representatives, trade associations and professional bodies;

in the course of work being undertaken for the Department by individuals in an advisory capacity;

at agricultural and trade shows.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

### Departmental Expenditure

**Mr. John D. Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proportion of expenditure in the last financial year has taken place in each month in each Northern Ireland Department; what percentage variations occur between months; and what is Her Majesty's Government's policy in relation to surges in expenditure so as to avoid departmental underspends at the end of the financial year. [21787]

**Sir John Wheeler:** The information requested is given in the following tables and excludes the following departmental expenditure.

Education—Teachers superannuation expenditure.

Economic Development—Privatisation of the electricity supply industry in Northern Ireland. A total of £190,189,000 was received during the year from the second payment in respect of the sales of shares. This sum less expenses of £3,444,000 was paid over to the Uk Consolidated Fund.

Finance and Personnel—£6 million payment made in March 1995 in respect of advance funding of early departure costs.

Departments should keep within annual budgets and decisions on spending should have regard to achieving the best possible value for money. Departments may carry forward into the following financial year running costs and capital underspends under the end of year flexibility schemes.

*Departmental expenditure*

*Per cent.*

| Month | Finance and Personnel | | Environment | | Economic Development | | Agriculture | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Proportion of expenditure | Variations | Proportion of expenditure | Variations | Proportion of expenditure | Variations | Proportion of expenditure | Variations |
| April 1994 | 7.59 | — | 5.5 | — | 6.7 | — | 5.2 | — |
| May 1994 | 7.52 | –0.84 | 6.5 | +17.4 | 7.4 | +8.7 | 7.1 | +34.7 |
| June 1994 | 6.67 | –11.26 | 6.6 | +1.8 | 8.5 | +16.4 | 12.7 | +79.7 |
| July 1994 | 7.10 | +6.40 | 5.1 | –22.8 | 7.3 | –14.2 | 6.3 | –50.6 |
| August 1994 | 7.34 | +3.39 | 6.5 | +27.4 | 8.1 | +10.4 | 10.2 | +63.4 |
| September 1994 | 6.89 | –6.18 | 13.3 | +104.6 | 8.4 | +3.9 | 5.4 | –47.8 |
| October 1994 | 6.57 | –4.68 | 5.6 | –58.0 | 7.4 | –11.8 | 4.4 | –17.0 |
| November 1994 | 7.11 | +8.20 | 6.7 | +20.9 | 8.1 | +9.9 | 15.2 | +243.2 |
| December 1994 | 7.51 | +5.64 | 6.8 | +0.4 | 8.9 | +10.1 | 10.3 | –32.7 |
| January 1995 | 10.28 | +36.89 | 4.8 | –28.3 | 8.6 | –3.2 | 5.2 | –49.0 |
| February 1995 | 13.94 | +35.67 | 13.4 | +175.3 | 7.2 | –16.5 | 8.1 | +55.8 |
| March 1995 | 11.48 | –17.62 | 19.2 | +43.6 | 13.4 | +86.3 | 9.9 | +21.2 |

*Departmental expenditure*

*Per cent.*

| Month | Education | | Health and Social Services | | Northern Ireland Office | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Proportion of expenditure | Variations | Proportion of expenditure | Variations | Proportion of expenditure | Variations |
| April 1994 | 8.1 | — | 4.64 | — | 7.43 | — |
| May 1994 | 7.9 | –2.5 | 7.31 | +57.8 | 8.84 | +19.02 |
| June 1994 | 8.8 | +11.4 | 7.65 | +4.7 | 8.08 | –8.53 |
| July 1994 | 7.2 | –18.2 | 7.62 | –0.5 | 8.13 | +0.55 |
| August 1994 | 7.1 | –1.4 | 7.47 | –2.0 | 7.18 | –11.71 |
| September 1994 | 7.9 | +11.3 | 8.88 | +18.9 | 8.72 | +21.48 |
| October 1994 | 8.6 | +8.9 | 7.61 | –14.3 | 7.55 | –13.37 |
| November 1994 | 8.4 | –2.3 | 7.75 | +2.0 | 8.41 | +11.39 |
| December 1994 | 8.2 | –2.4 | 8.44 | +8.7 | 7.49 | –11.00 |
| January 1995 | 7.9 | –3.7 | 8.77 | +4.0 | 7.91 | +5.64 |
| February 1995 | 8.7 | +10.1 | 8.59 | –2.0 | 8.40 | +6.20 |
| March 1995 | 11.2 | +28.7 | [1]15.26 | +26.6 | 11.86 | +41.12 |

[1] Including prior year payments.

## Advice Services

**Dr. Hendron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how the Department of Health and Social Services will apply the policy of targeting social needs to advice services; [22103]

(2) what is the Department of Health and Social Services strategy in terms of funding advice services in areas of greatest need. [22104]

**Mr. Moss:** From 1 April 1995, new funding arrangements have been introduced for independent advice centres in Northern Ireland. The new arrangements will ensure that resources are targeted on areas of greatest need by taking account of the extent of social need in each area on the basis of objective indicators of deprivation. Additional resources are being made available by the Department of Health and Social Services to raise the grant available to district councils for their support of advice services from £260,000 in 1994–95 to £377,000 in 1995–96.

**Dr. Hendron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the current level of Government funding of advice services by *(a)* central Government and *(b)* local government. [22101]

**Mr. Moss:** The level of funding of advice services in Northern Ireland in 1993–94, the latest year for which information is available, is as follows:

| | £ |
|---|---|
| *(a)* central Government | 1,466,190 |
| *(b)* local government | 281,731 |

**Dr. Hendron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will estimate the amount of increased income and increased benefit take-up generated on behalf of clients by independent advice agencies in *(a)* Belfast and *(b)* Northern Ireland; and what impact this has had on the local economy in *(a)* Belfast and *(b)* Northern Ireland. [22106]

**Mr. Moss:** The information required to carry out such estimates is not available.

**Dr. Hendron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the Department of Health and

Social Services' policy in terms of funding advice services in the areas of greatest need covering the making Belfast work area. [22105]

**Mr. Moss:** The Department's policy in this area is the same as applies throughout Northern Ireland. That is to ensure that resources are targeted to take account of the extent of social need in each area on the basis of objective indicators of deprivation. Under the Making Belfast Work initiative, additional funding has been made available to support the work of advice services in the greater Belfast area. In 1994–95 this amounted to £160,000. The aim of this initiative is to strengthen and better target the efforts being made by the community, the private sector and the Government in addressing the economic, educational, social, health and environmental problems facing residents in the areas of greatest need in Belfast.

# Written Answers to Questions

*Friday 5 May 1995*

## LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

### Defamation

**Mr. Waller:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department when he expects to introduce legislation to assist parties seeking speedy and economic results in defamation proceedings. [22341]

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** The Government announced in November 1994 that there would be a new summary procedure which would help parties to defamation proceedings to clarify the real issues much earlier, and provide an inexpensive fast track for the disposal of straightforward claims. We are making good progress in preparing the draft statutory framework and will introduce legislation as soon as there is a suitable opportunity.

### Fraud

**Mr. Amess:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what assessment he has made of the adequacy of self-regulation by solicitors in respect of the treatment of fraud; and what assessment he has made of the impact of self-regulation on *(a)* the number of firms operating and *(b)* the number of claims against law firms. [22147]

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** I do not consider that the self-regulation by the Law Society in respect of the treatment of fraud is inadequate. The solicitors' profession functions independently of Government and it is the responsibility of the Law Society to maintain standards of conduct within the profession. The Law Society's statutory powers to deal with complaints about solicitors, including the investigation of fraud, have been delegated to the Solicitors Complaints Bureau. The SCB has responded to the apparent increase in fraud by increased fraud investigation work, including an increased number of inspections of solicitors' firms. The Law Society co-operates fully with other regulatory and Government bodies involved in combating fraud. It keeps under review the effectiveness of its response to the problem of fraud.

## PRIME MINISTER

### Kashmir Elections

**Mr. Cox:** To ask the Prime Minister what discussions he has had with the Indian Government as to the holding of elections during the current year in the Indian-occupied area of Kashmir; and if he will make a statement on the criteria the British Government will expect to see followed to have confidence that such elections were free and fair. [22380]

**The Prime Minister:** I have had no recent discussions with the Indian Government, but my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary discussed elections in Kashmir during his visit to India in January. We shall be considering with our European partners how best to assess the forthcoming elections in Kashmir.

### Atlantic Trade

**Mr. Gill:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on his discussions with President Clinton concerning a merger between the North American Free Trade Area and the European Union. [23039]

**The Prime Minister:** The UK Government, the European Commission and the US Administration are each looking at various specific ways of liberalising trade both across the north Atlantic and more generally. We believe Europe and north America must work together for free and open trade across the Atlantic.

## EMPLOYMENT

### Wages Council

**Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has happened to the pay of employees working in sectors formerly covered by wage councils, since their abolition in 1993. [18426]

**Mr. Oppenheim:** The labour force survey shows that average earnings of workers in the industrial sectors in which wages councils mainly operated increased by 6.3 per cent. over the 12 months to autumn 1994.

## HEALTH

### Local Pay

**Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her estimate of the total administrative cost to NHS trusts of negotiating local pay schemes. [21677]

**Mr. Malone:** Information is not available centrally about local arrangements but it is expected that any additional costs for individual trusts would be more than offset by savings from increased flexibility in the use of staff. When trusts were established, infrastructure for human resources, which includes the ability to support local pay arrangements was an essential part of our investment in strengthening the finance, information technology and personnel functions throughout the national health service.

**Mrs. Beckett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many chief executives of trusts had not set up local pay machinery by February; and of those that succeeded what was the average change in personnel staff and cost to trust hospitals. [21745]

**Mr. Malone:** Information is not available about the local arrangements established following the letter of 6 June 1994 from the chief executive of the national health service executive asking trusts to establish local pay machinery by February 1995. When trusts were established, infrastructure for human resources, which includes the ability to support local pay arrangements was

an essential part of our investment in strengthening the finance, information technology and personnel functions throughout the national health service.

**Mrs. Beckett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 24 April, *Official Report*, column *321*, if she will list each of the trusts that have made local pay offers giving *(a)* the total percentage offered to staff, *(b)* what conditions are attached to the offer and *(c)* whether the offer has been accepted. [22813]

**Mr. Malone:** Comprehensive details of local negotiations are not available centrally. But it is understood that, by 2 May, at least 195 trusts in England had made their offers known, of which 147 are of around 3 per cent. We also understand that staff side representatives are generally unwilling to engage in negotiations.

### NHS Trusts

**Mrs. Beckett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what have been the establishment costs including expenditure on conveyancing for trusts by former regional health authority areas in each of the five waves of trusts; and if she will list the number of trusts established by region in each wave. [21754]

**Mr. Malone:** This information will be placed in the Library.

### Accident and Emergency Departments

**Mr. Robert G. Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence she has that larger accident and emergency departments produce better clinical outcomes. [23173]

**Mrs. Virginia Bottomley:** There is a considerable body of scientific evidence showing that patients who have suffered a major injury receive more effective care in large, properly staffed, accident and emergency departments. I have today placed in the Library a review of the literature on the relationship between the size of accident and emergency departments and clinical outcomes prepared by my Department.

### Medical (Professional Performance) Bill

**Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what undertakings have been made by Her Majesty's Government to the General Medical Council in respect of the Medical (Professional Performance) Bill, other than an intention to obtain Royal Assent to that Bill during the current Session of Parliament. [23012]

**Mr. Malone:** None.

### General Medical Council

**Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to the ministerial statements made in Standing Committee A, considering the Medical (Professional Performance) Bill on 2 May, if she will list the numbers, category and date of Parliamentary Assent by Resolution, or other procedures, of *(a)* regulations and *(b)* rules of the General Council now in force. [23011]

**Mr. Malone:** The General Medical Council has advised me that the following statutory instruments are currently in force.

| *SI Number* | *Category* | *Laid before Parliament* |
|---|---|---|
| 1977/827 | Order | 19 May 1977 |
| 1979/29 | Rules | 19 January 1979 |
| 1979/112 | Order | 14 February 1979 |
| 1979/844 | Regulations | [1]— |
| 1979/1358 | Rules | 5 November 1979 |
| 1980/860 | Rules | 1 July 1980 |
| 1980/941 | Rules | 10 July 1980 |
| 1982/1076 | Order | 9 August 1982 |
| 1986/23 | Order | 15 January 1986 |
| 1986/149 | Regulations | [1]— |
| 1986/1390 | Rules | 11 August 1986 |
| 1987/1120 | Rules | 6 July 1987 |
| 1987/2166 | Regulations | [1]— |
| 1987/2174 | Rules | 17 December 1987 |
| 1988/2255 | Rules | 22 December 1988 |
| 1989/496 | Order | 23 March 1989 |
| 1989/1837 | Rules | 10 October 1989 |
| 1990/1587 | Rules | 9 August 1990 |
| 1991/53 | Regulation | [1]— |
| 1994/2022 | Rules | 1 August 1994 |
| 1994/3171 | Rules | 13 December 1994 |
| 1994/3298 | Rules | 29 December 1994 |

[1]Regulations made under section 32 of the Medical Act 1983 do not need to be laid before Parliament but come into effect when approved by order of the Privy Council.

### NHS (Private Practice)

**Mrs. Beckett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health, how many private patients were treated in NHS facilities by region and in total in 1993–94. [22812]

**Mr. Sackville:** The information requested is due to be published in volume 1 of "Hospital Episode Statics, England; Financial Year 1993–94", shortly. Copies will be available in the Library.

### Medical Negligence

**Mrs. Beckett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many cases of alleged medical negligence by the NHS were awaiting settlement or court hearing at 30 April in each of the last five years; [22814]

(2) what is the average time taken for an alleged medical negligence case to be settled; and if she will make a statement on how the average time has changed over the past five years; [22815]

(3) if she will list all current alleged medical negligence cases against the NHS by *(a)* type of allegation and *(b)* length of time waiting for settlement. [22816]

**Mr. Malone:** This information is not available centrally.

## TREASURY

### Financial Services Act 1986

**Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to alter the scope of the Financial Services Act 1986. [23138]

**Mr. Nelson:** It has been suggested that non-financial spread betting should no longer be regulated under the Financial Services Act. However, in the light of a number of representations from right hon. and hon. Members and others, I have concluded that such a change would not be

justified, in the absence of alternative regulatory arrangements offering equivalent protection. I do not therefore propose to make any change at the present time.

### GPs' and Consultants' Earnings

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the effects of income tax at the rates of 1978 and 1995 on the average general practitioner's and on the average NHS consultant's earnings. [21741]

**Sir George Young:** Based on expected levels of average net incomes for general practitioners providing general medical services in 1994–95, a single GP will pay over £65 a week less income tax in 1995–96 than under a 1978–79 indexed tax regime. In addition, a GP could also earn income from non-GMS sources. For the purposes of the calculation, it has been assumed that the GP has no tax allowances or reliefs except for the basic personal allowance.

It is not possible to produce a comparable estimate for consultants because the latest available data relate to 1991–92 levels of earnings.

### Retail Prices Indexes

**Mrs. Jane Kennedy:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of the retail prices index is comprised of water rates; and how the weighting of water rates within the retail prices index has changed over the last five years. [22544]

**Mr. Nelson** *[holding answer 4 May 1995]:* The information requested is available in table A3 of the publication "Retail Prices Index February 1995"; CSO "Business Monitor" MM23, a copy of which is available in the Library.

**Sir Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement outlining the differences in the procedures of the EU nations in formulating their cost of living indexes; and what endeavours there are to harmonise the methods of calculation. [22550]

**Mr. Nelson** *[holding answer 4 May 1995]:* Measures of consumer prices indices vary widely across the EU in terms of concepts, methods and practices. The most notable differences are in the treatment of owner-occupied housing, and health and educational services. The Statistical Office of the European Communities—EUROSTAT—has prepared a draft Council regulation, which, with the co-operation of national statistical offices, establishes a harmonisation programme with the aim of achieving comparability across member states.

### Minicab Drivers

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how frequently and by what methods the Inland Revenue makes audits of drivers working at the unlicensed private hire or minicab firms within Greater London; and if he will make a statement. [21172]

**Sir George Young** *[holding answer 4 May 1995]:* Audits of employers' records are normally carried out by the Inland Revenue where there is reason to believe that the tax has not been correctly deducted from employees' pay under the PAYE system. Tax office staff also investigate self-employed people where there is reason to believe that they may not have properly declared income for tax purposes. Specific figures relating to private hire and minicab firms in London are not compiled.

## NATIONAL HERITAGE

### Broadcasting Complaints

**Mr. McNamara:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many complaints were made to the Broadcasting Standards Councils in 1994; on how many it made a judgment; how many related to the BBC; and how many relating to the BBC or others were *(a)* upheld, *(b)* partly upheld and *(c)* not upheld. [21030]

**Mr. Dorrell** *[holding answer 4 May 1995]:* The Broadcasting Standards Council records figures for complaints received by financial year, not calender year. I understand that the council received a total of 2,829 complaints in the financial year 1994–95. More detailed figures are not available at present but will be published in July in the council's annual report for 1994–95.

### Churchill Papers

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will set up an independent committee to examine the history of the ownership of the papers which the Churchill family have sold to the national heritage memorial fund; and if the family has a right to charge for their reproduction. [22528]

**Mr. Dorrell:** I will not be setting up an independent committee to examine the history of ownership of the papers which have been acquired for Churchill college, Cambridge through lottery funds distributed by the national heritage memorial fund.

Subject to the fair dealing and any other available exceptions in the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, it is for the copyright owners to license reproductions of copyright material and to charge for such reproductions if they think it appropriate. The owners of the copyright in the non-state papers sold to Churchill college retain this right in those papers but have granted a licence to enable the papers to be copied without payment of a royalty in the circumstances referred to in sections 37 to 43 of the 1988 Act—copying by libraries and archives. The Crown has retained similar rights in respect of the state papers and has also granted a similar licence.

**Mr. Fisher:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) if he will publish the names of those people who advised the national heritage memorial fund on the valuation of the Churchill papers; [22117]

(2) if he will publish both the identities of the valuers and their valuation advice for all future purchases financed by the national heritage memorial fund; [22118]

(3) if he will publish all the valuation advice received by the national heritage memorial fund. [22119]

**Mr. Dorrell** *[holding answer 2 May 1995]:* This is a matter for the national heritage memorial fund, which is an independent body. I understand, however, that the chairman has written to the hon. Member. I have asked him to place copies of his letter in the Library of the House.

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage who will grant requests to reproduce documents purchased from the Churchill family by the national heritage memorial fund; and what steps will be taken to ensure that the family do not charge for the reproduction of any document at any time covered by the Official Secrets Acts. [22623]

**Mr. Dorrell:** Permission to reproduce the documents from the Churchill archive for commercial purposes will have to be sought from the copyright owners. Copyright in the non-state papers is vested in the Churchill family, copyright in the state paper is vested in the Crown.

Any person who wishes to reproduce for commercial purposes a work in which copyright subsists must ensure that he or she has the appropriate permission.

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

### Haitian Refugees

**Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his estimate of the number of refugees from Haiti currently on the Turks and Caicos Islands; what action is being taken to capture and contain them; what further action he proposes to deal with their return; and if he will make a statement. [22428]

**Mr. Baldry:** There are no accurate figures for the number of Haitian migrants in the Turks and Caicos Islands—TCI. The total Haitian population in the territory is estimated to be around 8,000, of whom 1,500 hold work permits.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees recommended a registration project, to be carried out by a non-governmental organisation. The project is designed to register all Haitian migrants in the TCI and to establish whether those migrants without a work or resident permit have a case for remaining in the territory. That decision would be taken by the TCI authorities.

We have received a draft project proposal from the International Catholic Migration Commission, an experienced NGO based in Geneva, and are currently discussing it with the TCI Government.

The TCI Government have negotiated a draft agreement with the Haitian Government on the orderly repatriation of Haitians identified as economic migrants by the registration project.

Meanwhile, the surge in illegal Haitian immigration into the TCI over Easter has forced the TCI Government to conduct regular immigration sweeps to identify, screen and repatriate recent arrivals in advance of any registration project.

In parallel, the TCI authorities are seeking to prevent further undetected arrivals of illegal immigrants with the temporary support of the West Indies guardship and units of the US coast guard.

### Spiro Family (USA)

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions have taken place with representatives of the United States Government on the circumstances surrounding the death of members of the Spiro family in the United States of America. [22535]

**Mr. Baldry:** There have been a number of exchanges. Most recently our consul-general in Los Angeles pressed the San Diego authorities on 8 February 1994 for information from the medical examiner's records for the United Kingdom coroner. The San Diego county sheriff has said he will release the medical examiner's report as soon as his investigation is concluded. The consul-general is keeping in touch with the San Diego authorities.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will request representatives of the Government of the United States of America to ask United States law enforcement officers to interview Mr. Alain and Mr. Arthur Ivy on the question of what knowledge they may have as to the circumstances surrounding the death of the Spiro family. [22536]

**Mr. Baldry:** The Spiro family died in the United States of America and it is for the authorities of that country to pursue investigations into the incident.

### Cuban Refugees

**Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to deal with the Cuban refugees currently remaining on the Cayman Islands; what discussions he has with the Governments of the United States and Cuba to try to prevent further exodus of Cubans to the Cayman Islands; and if he will make a statement. [22426]

**Mr. Baldry:** I refer the hon. Member to the statement issued on 2 May by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The decision to repatriate any future Cuban migrants who fail the refugee screening process in the Cayman Islands was taken with the full agreement of the Cuban Government. The United States Government have now announced a similar policy.

**Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his estimate of the cost of the United Kingdom police sent to the Cayman Islands to help deal with the Cuban refugees; how this is to be met; and if he will make a statement. [22427]

**Mr. Baldry:** The cost of deploying United Kingdom police to the Cayman Islands, including transport, is estimated to be £375,000. It will be met in full by the Cayman Islands Government.

**Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what estimate he has made of the total cost of the Cuban refugees on the Cayman Islands including any repatriation and the costs of keeping those who are housed at Guantanamo; how he plans such costs should be met; what discussions he has had with the Government of the United States about their responsibilities for the costs involved; and if he will make a statement. [22425]

**Mr. Baldry:** The total cost to date is approximately £2.7 million, the majority of which has been met by the Cayman Islands Government. We have spent £175,000 in providing material and technical assistance. We are also pursuing the possibility of EU funding for the continuing cost to the Cayman Islands Government.

The US Government agreed in December 1994 to offer up to 900 places in their safe haven at Guantanamo bay for Cuban migrants who volunteer to transfer from the Caymans. A total of 723 have so far done so. The Cayman Islands Government agreed to meet the cost of

transferring and supporting these migrants in Guantanamo bay. Subsistence costs in Guantanamo are US$10 per person per day, but no invoice has yet been raised by the Americans. The Guantanamo costs are therefore not included in the above total.

### Turkey

**Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about Government policy in respect of the recent debate and vote at the Council of Europe meeting on the future membership of Turkey of the Council of Europe Assembly. [22406]

**Mr. David Davis:** The Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly debated and carried on 26 April a motion for a recommendation on

"Turkey's military intervention in northern Iraq and on Turkey's respect of commitments concerning constitutional and legislative reforms."

The recommendation will be discussed shortly in the Committee of Ministers. We are considering our position in advance of any discussion. We share the Assembly's concern about Turkey's human rights record. But we see continued dialogue through the Council of Europe as an important aspect of our relationship with Turkey, including as a means of conveying to the Turkish Government our concerns on human rights.

### Iqbal Masih

**Mr. David Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs for what reasons the application of Iqbal Masih of Pakistan for a visa to visit the United Kingdom was refused; and if he will make a statement. [22580]

**Mr. Baldry:** As I said in my reply of 3 May columns *249–50* to the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) Mr Iqbal Masih's visa application was not refused.

### Social Development Fund

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the United Kingdom will take part in the social development fund of the Council of Europe; and if he will make a statement. [22750]

**Mr. David Davis:** There are no plans for United Kingdom participation in the social development fund of the Council of Europe.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

### Schools, Derry

**Mr. John D. Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the enrolment figures for each school in the Derry city council area for each year since 1984, according to educational sector. [21785]

**Mr. Ancram:** The enrolment figures are as follows:

*Enrolment figures for each school in the Derry City council area 1984–85 to 1994–95*

| | *1984–85* | *1985–86* | *1986–87* | *1987–88* | *1988–89* | *1989–90* | *1990–91* | *1991–92* | *1992–93* | *1993–94* | *1994–95* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Nursery schools* | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Belmont | 72 | 70 | 66 | 70 | 65 | 68 | 72 | 75 | 75 | 75 | 74 |
| Bligh's Lane | 73 | 74 | 66 | 72 | 70 | 73 | 68 | 75 | 75 | 76 | 75 |
| Carnhill | 65 | 65 | 62 | 55 | 59 | 58 | 69 | 71 | 52 | 76 | 75 |
| Galliagh | 72 | 68 | 67 | 71 | 69 | 65 | 66 | 74 | 75 | 78 | 77 |
| Lisnagelvin | 72 | 64 | 72 | 68 | 73 | 70 | 73 | 75 | 75 | 77 | 75 |
| Londonderry | 70 | 72 | 70 | 68 | 67 | 67 | 68 | 72 | 74 | 74 | 75 |
| Strathfoyle | 51 | 49 | 49 | 50 | 54 | 54 | 51 | 56 | 50 | 50 | 52 |
| Trench Road | 48 | 50 | 63 | 50 | 49 | 50 | 50 | 74 | 50 | 73 | 69 |
| *Primary schools* | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1. Balloughry | 27 | 29 | 24 | 27 | 39 | 42 | 46 | 44 | 38 | 39 | 45 |
| Broadbridge | 163 | 160 | 166 | 168 | 171 | 188 | 189 | 188 | 184 | 190 | 195 |
| Bunscoil Cholmcille | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | 182 | 193 |
| Carlisle Road | 66 | 65 | 65 | 67 | 62 | 62 | 58 | 39 | 37 | 38 | 27 |
| Carnhill | 693 | 645 | 601 | 542 | 537 | 521 | 507 | 512 | 488 | 477 | 439 |
| Chapel Road | 208 | 195 | 195 | 188 | 178 | 196 | 195 | 192 | 191 | 191 | 163 |
| Claudy | 317 | 324 | 325 | 322 | 326 | 311 | 289 | 293 | 281 | 256 | 249 |
| Craigbrack | 76 | 88 | 84 | 77 | 83 | 84 | 90 | 86 | 96 | 94 | 102 |
| Culmore | 66 | 72 | 69 | 60 | 52 | 35 | 34 | 29 | 29 | 23 | 29 |
| 2. Cumber Claudy | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | 154 |
| Cumber Upper | 24 | 21 | 27 | 30 | 28 | 28 | 30 | 25 | 24 | 20 | — |
| Drumahoe | 225 | 228 | 232 | 234 | 232 | 228 | 213 | 214 | 223 | 221 | 202 |
| Dungiven Road | 392 | 436 | 458 | 456 | 469 | 505 | 493 | 483 | 490 | 473 | 463 |
| Ebrington | 598 | 609 | 612 | 597 | 605 | 613 | 604 | 596 | 587 | 594 | 578 |
| Eglinton | 202 | 211 | 213 | 219 | 225 | 199 | 211 | 210 | 198 | 219 | 218 |
| First Derry | 56 | 64 | 63 | 56 | 52 | 50 | 43 | 51 | 53 | 60 | 72 |
| Fort James | 259 | 235 | 226 | 232 | 226 | 217 | 207 | 211 | 206 | 188 | 189 |
| 3. Foyle and Londonderry Prep | — | — | 61 | 57 | 58 | 60 | 61 | 66 | 59 | 53 | 47 |
| Glendermott | 163 | 164 | 168 | 166 | 167 | 161 | 174 | 182 | 150 | 148 | 150 |
| Greenhaw | 264 | 279 | 285 | 292 | 290 | 290 | 295 | 291 | 280 | 294 | 297 |
| Groarty | 57 | 56 | 56 | 47 | 41 | 34 | 27 | 28 | 27 | 30 | 35 |
| Hollybush | 159 | 164 | 171 | 186 | 184 | 200 | 201 | 211 | 231 | 246 | 247 |
| Holy Child | 421 | 447 | 494 | 472 | 476 | 477 | 474 | 472 | 450 | 410 | 383 |
| 4. Holy Family | — | — | — | 458 | 656 | 867 | 1,040 | 1,107 | 1,182 | 1,195 | 1,161 |
| Killaloo Cumber | 119 | 111 | 115 | 99 | 97 | 97 | 97 | 80 | 69 | 70 | — |
| Lenamore | 361 | 416 | 451 | 462 | 478 | 473 | 499 | 490 | 494 | 478 | 472 |
| Lisnagelvin | 528 | 530 | 530 | 545 | 566 | 566 | 574 | 577 | 577 | 590 | 569 |

*Enrolment figures for each school in the Derry City council area 1984–85 to 1994–95*

| | 1984–85 | 1985–86 | 1986–87 | 1987–88 | 1988–89 | 1989–90 | 1990–91 | 1991–92 | 1992–93 | 1993–94 | 1994–95 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Listress | 47 | 49 | 47 | 47 | 38 | 43 | 36 | 39 | 38 | 38 | 35 |
| Londonderry Model | 283 | 325 | 352 | 352 | 361 | 360 | 371 | 378 | 383 | 396 | 391 |
| 5. Longtower | — | — | — | — | 559 | 573 | 566 | 564 | 579 | 551 | 556 |
| Maydown | 104 | 107 | 101 | 95 | 96 | 102 | 106 | 134 | 93 | 84 | 84 |
| Mullabuoy | 204 | 180 | 175 | 165 | 164 | 153 | 141 | 136 | 134 | 120 | 121 |
| Nazareth House | 393 | 413 | 431 | 406 | 413 | 402 | 405 | 401 | 408 | 383 | 377 |
| Newbuildings | 333 | 325 | 316 | 316 | 319 | 327 | 344 | 333 | 346 | 338 | 334 |
| 6. Oakgrove Integrated | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | 96 | 173 | 219 | 262 |
| Rosemount | 458 | 459 | 477 | 447 | 441 | 428 | 410 | 443 | 406 | 396 | 381 |
| Slievemore | 764 | 764 | 797 | 723 | 722 | 720 | 671 | 664 | 649 | 610 | 590 |
| St. Anne's | 746 | 770 | 765 | 743 | 743 | 750 | 750 | 751 | 748 | 752 | 741 |
| St. Columba's | 133 | 123 | 107 | 99 | 102 | 97 | 93 | 103 | 116 | 122 | 134 |
| St. Columba's Boys' | 229 | 248 | 255 | 234 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| St. Columba's Girls' | 272 | 292 | 294 | 280 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| 8. St. Columb's Convent | 32 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| St. Eugene's | — | — | — | — | — | — | 556 | 542 | 534 | 524 | 493 |
| 9. St. Eugene's Boys' | 294 | 351 | 332 | 359 | 332 | 351 | — | — | — | — | — |
| St. Eugene's Girls' | 260 | 262 | 253 | 234 | 226 | 235 | — | — | — | — | — |
| St. John's | 659 | 667 | 667 | 665 | 674 | 665 | 668 | 671 | 697 | 709 | 721 |
| St. Mary's Claudy | 120 | 110 | 115 | 118 | 120 | 121 | 124 | 124 | 132 | 133 | 137 |
| St. Oliver Plunkett | 222 | 229 | 222 | 216 | 206 | 215 | 225 | 236 | 242 | 235 | 256 |
| 7. St. Patrick's Boys | 314 | 313 | 326 | 338 | 319 | 328 | 280 | 268 | 287 | 287 | — |
| St. Patrick's Girls | 299 | 303 | 315 | 310 | 307 | 282 | 272 | 274 | 237 | 239 | — |
| St. Patrick's Infants | 509 | 527 | 516 | 417 | 416 | 398 | 413 | 373 | 390 | 404 | — |
| St. Patrick's Pennyburn | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | 919 |
| Steelstown | 712 | 682 | 695 | 689 | 705 | 727 | 738 | 749 | 791 | 632 | 667 |
| Straidarran | 66 | 72 | 78 | 72 | 67 | 67 | 64 | 63 | 69 | 67 | — |
| Strathfoyle | 90 | 86 | 78 | 67 | 70 | 59 | 53 | 53 | 89 | 37 | 40 |
| The Cathedral | 33 | 35 | 32 | 37 | 25 | 27 | 11 | 7 | 11 | 12 | 10 |
| Trench Road | 419 | 402 | 396 | 404 | 403 | 403 | 403 | 396 | 416 | 424 | 429 |
| *Secondary schools* | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Clondermot | 571 | 560 | 565 | 567 | 585 | 583 | 586 | 590 | 562 | 558 | 524 |
| Faughan Valley | 549 | 528 | 525 | 519 | 495 | 477 | 493 | 528 | 541 | 558 | 586 |
| 10. Oakgrove | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | 79 | 180 | 280 |
| St. Brecan's | 671 | 573 | 527 | 471 | 454 | 402 | 385 | 378 | 372 | 371 | 369 |
| St. Brigid's | 1,052 | 1,050 | 1,052 | 1,011 | 1,033 | 1,011 | 1,055 | 1,059 | 1,036 | 1,002 | 979 |
| St. Cecilia's | 634 | 659 | 702 | 748 | 774 | 794 | 832 | 855 | 902 | 925 | 944 |
| St. Joseph's | 747 | 745 | 750 | 769 | 781 | 785 | 798 | 836 | 846 | 841 | 850 |
| St. Mary's | 751 | 766 | 768 | 778 | 788 | 787 | 810 | 840 | 879 | 915 | 928 |
| St. Patrick's and St. Brigid's | 540 | 549 | 505 | 485 | 482 | 500 | 485 | 493 | 482 | 483 | 468 |
| St. Peter's | 545 | 498 | 462 | 416 | 384 | 359 | 362 | 390 | 391 | 416 | 408 |
| Templemore | 389 | 405 | 402 | 397 | 407 | 410 | 412 | 410 | 415 | 395 | 401 |
| *Grammar schools* | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 11. Foyle and Londonderry | 850 | 816 | 768 | 771 | 785 | 785 | 827 | 847 | 880 | 907 | 923 |
| Thornhill | 1,359 | 1,319 | 1,273 | 1,256 | 1,306 | 1,266 | 1,302 | 1,405 | 1,459 | 1,476 | 1,474 |
| St. Columb's | 1,526 | 1,526 | 1,562 | 1,560 | 1,533 | 1,519 | 1,561 | 1,583 | 1,613 | 1,684 | 1,696 |
| 12. *Special schools* | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Belmont House | n/a | n/a | 159 | 169 | 161 | 159 | 157 | 147 | 158 | 168 | 180 |
| Foyleview | n/a | n/a | 83 | 90 | 95 | 95 | 89 | 95 | 100 | 97 | 92 |

*Notes:*

*Primary schools*

1. Bunscoil Cholmcille opened 1 September 1993.
2. Cumber Claudy opened 1 September 1994 replacing Cumber Upper, Straidarran and Killaloo Cumber.
3. Figures for Foyle and Londonderry Prep for 1984–85 and 1985–86 are included in the grammar school enrolments and cannot be separated.
4. Holy Family, Ballymagroarty, opened 1 September 1987.
5. Longtower opened 1 September 1988 and was an amalgamation of St. Columba boys' and St. Columba girls' which both closed 1 September 1988.
6. Oakgrove integrated opened 2 September 1991.
7. St. Patrick's boys', girls and infants all closed 1 September 1994 and were replaced by St. Patrick's Pennyburn.
8. St. Columb's convent closed 1 September 1985.
9. St. Eugene's boys and girls amalgamated to form St. Eugene's primary 1 September 1990.

Secondary schools

10. Oakgrove college opened 1 September 1992.

Grammar Schools

11. Figures for Foyle and Londonderry for 1984–85 and 1985–86 include preparatory department pupils.

Special schools

12. Figures for 1984–85 and 1985–86 for special schools are not available.

**Mr. John D. Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the number of children enrolled in each sector of primary education for each year since 1984 in *(a)* the Derry city council areas and *(b)* Northern Ireland. [21786]

**Mr. Ancram:** The information is as follows:

*Number of children enrolled in each sector of primary education (1984–85 to 1994–95)*

| | | 1984–85 | 1985–86 | 1986–87 | 1987–88 | 1988–89 | 1989–90 | 1990–91 | 1991–92 | 1992–93 | 1993–94 | 1994–95 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Controlled | DCC | 3,221 | 3,275 | 3,287 | 3,254 | 3,286 | 3,236 | 3,246 | 3,241 | 3,164 | 3,190 | 3,165 |
| | NI | 91,670 | 90,695 | 90,351 | 89,791 | 90,329 | 90,764 | 90,741 | 90,452 | 91,826 | 91,230 | 91,549 |
| Voluntary | DCC | n/a | n/a | 61 | 57 | 58 | 60 | 61 | 66 | 59 | 53 | 47 |
| | NI | 3,692 | 3,585 | 3,548 | 3,569 | 3,293 | 3,326 | 3,197 | 3,119 | 3,118 | 3,151 | 3,109 |
| RC maintained | DCC | 10,218 | 10,368 | 10,485 | 10,581 | 10,782 | 11,041 | 10,902 | 10,950 | 11,091 | 10,899 | 10,774 |
| | NI | 89,936 | 90,762 | 91,846 | 92,954 | 94,369 | 95,436 | 93,596 | 93,492 | 93,524 | 92,826 | 91,830 |
| Other maintained | DCC | — | — | — | — | — | — | 142 | 122 | 125 | 130 | 109 |
| | NI | — | — | — | — | — | — | 1,360 | 1,192 | 1,104 | 1,129 | 1,158 |
| Controlled | DCC | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| | NI | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | 123 | 393 | 365 | 373 |
| GM integrated | DCC | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | 96 | 173 | 219 | 262 |
| | NI | — | — | — | — | — | — | 654 | 1,103 | 1,419 | 1,802 | 2,219 |
| Total | DCC | 13,439 | 13,643 | 13,833 | 13,892 | 14,126 | 14,337 | 14,351 | 14,475 | 14,612 | 14,491 | 14,357 |
| | NI | 185,298 | 185,042 | 185,745 | 186,314 | 187,991 | 189,526 | 189,548 | 189,481 | 190,384 | 190,503 | 190,238 |

1. Other maintained, controlled integrated and grant mainained integrated were new school management types introduced in 1990–91.
2. Some schools in the maintained sector became "Other Maintained" when the new category was introduced in 1990–91.
3. District council information assumes the current boundaries for all previous years.
4. Primary education covers all pupils in primary schools and preparatory departments of grammar schools.

### Community Relations

**Dr. Hendron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the current level of public funding of community relations by *(a)* central Government and *(b)* local government. [22102]

**Mr. Ancram:** The resources available for community relations are directed at consolidating a range of major initiatives which are designed to increase cross-community contact and encourage greater mutual understanding and respect of different cultures and traditions.

The current level of central Government funding for community relations work is £8.74 million. This includes grant of 75 per cent.—£1.87 million—to district councils for their own community relations programmes. The balance of funding is provided by local government. In addition, other local government programmes may involve projects relevant to community relations, notably community services and cultural facilities.

### Fair Employment

**Mr. McGrady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress he has made on the current review of the fair employment legislation in Northern Ireland, and if he will make a statement. [22111]

**Mr. Ancram:** In November 1994, my right hon. and learned Friend asked the Standing Advisory Commission for Human Rights to carry forward a review of employment equality after five years experience of the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1989. The commission is taking steps to do so, and a review report should be available in 1996.

### Education Administration

**Mr. Beggs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what were the numbers of staff and the administrative costs of statutory bodies responsible for aspects of the administration of the education system in Northern Ireland in the year ended 31 March; and what are the projected costs for 1995–96. [21792]

**Mr. Ancram:** The numbers of staff and the administrative costs for those statutory bodies engaged in the administration of the education system in Northern Ireland for the year ended 31 March 1995 and projected costs for the 1995–96 year are as follows:

| | Staff numbers 1994–95 | Annual costs (£000s) 1994–95 | 1995–96 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Council for Catholic Maintained Schools | 37 | 964 | 857 |
| DENI Inspectorate (including inspectorate support branch) | 65 | 3,061 | 3,236 |
| DENI—other staff | 518 | 11,960 | 12,389 |
| Education and Library Boards | | | |
| Belfast | 330 | 5,087 | 4,935 |
| North Eastern | 349 | 5,957 | 6,051 |

| | Staff numbers 1994–95 | Annual costs (£000s) 1994–95 | 1995–96 |
|---|---|---|---|
| South Eastern | 304 | 5,209 | 5,036 |
| Southern | 343 | 5,744 | 5,558 |
| Western | 291 | 5,603 | 4,859 |
| NI Council for the Curriculum and Assessment | [2]168 / [3]250 | 4,500 | 4,645 |
| Youth Council for NI | [4]17 | 340 | 360 |

*Notes:*

[1] Includes one temp.

[2] Full-time.

[3] Temporary.

[4] Includes two part-time.

### Social Fund

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list those projects in privatised companies which have received European social fund support since privatisation indicating *(a)* the level of funding and *(b)* the dates when it was received. [21293]

**Mr. Ancram** *[holding answer 1 May 1995]:* There are no privatised companies in Northern Ireland in direct receipt of support from the European social fund since their privatisation.

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list those public projects which received European social fund support and were subsequently privatised over the last 10 years indicating *(a)* the level of funding and *(b)* the dates when it was received. [21292]

**Mr. Ancram** *[holding answer 1 May 1995]:* Over the last 10 years, three public sector organisations, Northern Ireland Electricity, Harland and Wolff and Short Brothers received support from the European social fund as follows:

*ESF Paid (£)*

| | NIE | H and W | Shorts |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1985 | 733,564 | 475,591 | 815,349 |
| 1986 | 873,671 | 170,547 | 790,429 |
| 1987 | 856,619 | 384,623 | 324,563 |
| 1988 | 760,997 | 93,531 | 160,120 |
| 1989 | 605,442 | — | — |
| 1990 | 1,005,805 | — | — |
| 1991 | 1,037,414 | — | — |
| 1992 | 670,344 | — | — |
| 1993 | 176,390 | — | — |
| Total | 6,720,246 | 1,124,292 | 2,090,461 |

Funding was awarded to NIE to run EC–approved engineering apprenticeship training courses at a purpose-built training centre. H and W and Short Brothers did not make any further applications for ESF after 1988.

### Animal Diseases

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many cases of brucellosis have occurred in each year since 1985. [21819]

**Mr. Ancram:** The number of herds in which brucellosis has been confirmed in Northern Ireland since 1985 is as follows:

1985: Nil

1986: Nil

1987: Nil

1988: Nil

1989: 3

1990: 1

1991: 4

1992: 3

1993: Nil

1994: Nil

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many cases of pleuro-pneumonia occurred in each year since 1985. [22169]

**Mr. Ancram:** None

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many cases of paramyxovirus occurred in each year since 1985. [22173]

**Mr. Ancram:** Six outbreaks of paramyxovirus occurred in 1991.

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many cases of foot and mouth disease occurred in each year since 1978. [22177]

**Mr. Ancram:** None.

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many cases of epizootic lymphangitis occurred in each year since 1985. [22181]

**Mr. Ancram:** None.

### Prevention of Terrorism Legislation

**Ms Mowlam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people in Northern Ireland have been *(a)* arrested and *(b)* convicted under (i) section 9, (ii) section 10, (iii) section 11, (iv) section 12, (v) section 13, (vi) section 17 and (vii) section 18A of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 since 1989. [22446]

**Sir John Wheeler:** The information is as follows:

*(a)* Arrests for offences under sections 9, 10 and 11 are made under section 14 of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989. Data on arrests specifically for offences under 9, 10 and 11 are not available.

There are no powers of arrest under sections 12 and 13.

From the beginning of 1990, there were no arrests made under sections 17 or 18 of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1983.

*(b)* Since the enactment of the Provision of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989, up to the end of 1994, there have been 41 convictions under sections 9 to 11 and 16 convictions under section 18.

No convictions under section 17 have been recorded.

## OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

### Indonesian Police

**Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 3 March, *Official Report*, columns *727-28*, how many current or former Indonesian police officers who received any form of training paid for by his Department served with the Brigade Mobile—BRIMOB—of the Indonesian police force *(a)* before such training *(b)* during such training and *(c)* after such training. [22284]

**Mr. Baldry:** The Indonesian national police force inform us that one officer who has received training under our project has served with the Brigade Mobile. This officer is serving there at present.

## EDUCATION

### Reflexions Market Research Ltd.

**Mr. David Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) how many in-depth interviews her Department has commissioned Reflexions Market Research Ltd. to undertake; how many *(a)* parents, *(b)* teachers and *(c)* governors will be interviewed; how long the interviews will last; and what level of remuneration the interviewees will be given; [22463]

(2) how many focus groups her Department has commissioned Reflexions Market Research Ltd. to undertake to evaluate publicity material on grant-maintained schools; how many *(a)* parents, *(b)* teachers and *(c)* governors will be involved; and what level of remuneration the participants will be given; [22462]

(3) to how many schools her Department has written, and in what areas, to introduce a representative of Reflexions Market Research Ltd.; [22461]

(4) how much it is costing her Department to employ the services of Reflexions Market Research Ltd. to research the effectiveness of the Department's grant maintained schools publicity material;

(5) how many *(a)* video tapes and *(b)* pamphlets her Department has commissioned through Reflexions Market Research Ltd. [22459]

**Mr. Forth:** Reflexions Market Research Ltd. has been commissioned to undertake qualitative research to assist the Department to evaluate its publicity material on grant-maintained schools. Research of this type is common to all of our major information campaigns.

Eighteen in-depth interviews are being carried out: six with teachers, 12 with governors and none with parents. The interviews average 45 minutes. There are nine focus groups which comprise 21 parents, 35 teachers and seven governors.

In line with industry practice, each interviewee receives a nominal sum to cover travel and any child care costs.

A range of schools were written to in Northamptonshire, London, Sheffield, Sutton, Surrey and Warrington to obtain interviewees. These areas were chosen to provide a representative sample.

The cost of the research is commercial-in-confidence. No video tapes or pamphlets were commissioned from Reflexions.

### Stratford Grant-maintained School

**Mr. Lidington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps she is taking in relation to Stratford grant-maintained school. [23586]

**Mr. Forth:** Stratford grant-maintained school was inspected in November 1993 and found to be failing to provide an acceptable standard of education. Since then, it has been subject to regular termly monitoring by Ofsted. The most recent report from Ofsted shows that standards of teaching and learning remain poor, that management is inadequate, and that the school has shown no signs of improvement since it was first found to be failing 18 months ago.

This persistent failure to provide an acceptable standard of education cannot be tolerated. My right hon. Friend is, therefore, exercising her power to remodel the governing body. The chairman of the governing body, Mr. Mark Prisk, has resigned and my right hon. Friend is arranging for the appointment of four new governors: Dr. Peter Osbourne, Mrs. Pat Collarbone, Mrs. Joan Greenfield and Mr. Paul Lewis.

As a matter of urgency, this remodelled governing body will need to devise a strategy to revitalise the school. I look to the school's head teacher and her staff to give their whole-hearted support to raising standards at the school.

### Student Loans Company

**Mr. Barry Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what plans she has to allow medical students and those on above average length degree courses to borrow more money from the Student Loans Company. [22698]

**Mr. Boswell:** None.

### Medical Students

**Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many medical students failed to complete their courses due to financial difficulties in each of the last five years.

**Mr. Boswell:** This information is not currently available centrally.

**Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps she is taking to ensure that students undertaking medical science degrees are adequately financially supported during their courses. [22699]

**Mr. Boswell:** The total support available to all students in 1994–95 through the main rates of grant and loan is 4 per cent. higher than in 1993–94, thus maintaining its value in real terms. The extra weeks' allowances payable to students as part of the mandatory award who attend their courses for longer in the academic year than normal have also been increased by 4 per cent. Medical students, may benefit from these. The Government have also made £21 million in access funds available to universities and colleges in England for the 1994–95 academic year so that they can assist students, including medical students, in particular financial difficulty.

### Student Expenditure

**Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what element of the maintenance grant for students is allotted for expenditure on books and

equipment for *(a)* arts students, *(b)* social science students, *(c)* medical students and *(d)* engineering students. [22697]

**Mr. Boswell:** It is for students to decide how to spend the total resources available to them from both maintenance grants and loans according to their particular needs. Disabled students may be eligible for additional means-tested allowances to cover the cost of special equipment and materials. Local education authorities can also, in certain circumstances, make discretionary awards to pay for books and equipment to students who are not eligible for mandatory awards.

### Educational and Youth Exchanges

**Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will make a statement on educational and youth exchanges between the United Kingdom and Pakistan. [22377]

**Mr. Boswell:** In 1993–94, the Government-funded scholarships and awards for 568 Pakistani students here in the United Kingdom at a cost of around £5.1 million. In that same year the British Council administered 330 exchange visits to the UK from Pakistan, and the League for the Exchange of Commonwealth Teachers, funded by the UK Departments of Education, arranged 21 teacher exchanges. Through Government funding provided to the Commonwealth Youth Exchange Council, 23 young Pakistanis came to the UK in 1992–93, with 20 of our young people going to Pakistan in 1993–94.

## SCOTLAND

### Education Administration

**Mr. Beggs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the numbers of staff and the administrative costs of each education authority in Scotland and the number of school pupils for which each education authority was responsible in the year ended 31 March. [21789]

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** The information on administrative costs and pupil numbers is given in the following table for 1993–94, the latest available year. Details of numbers of staff employed by each education authority are not held centrally. However the "Joint Staffing Watch" records that, at September 1993. Scottish education authorities employed a total of 53,212, full-time equivalent, teachers and lecturers and 25,651, full-time equivalent, other staff, including non-teaching staff in schools and administrative staff.

| | *Net administrative expenditure of Education Departments £000* | *Pupils Numbers (FTE) in local authority nursery, primary, secondary and special schools* |
|---|---|---|
| Borders | 3,031 | 15,164 |
| Central | 6,553 | 42,417 |
| Dumfries and Galloway | 3,811 | 22,799 |
| Fife | 8,434 | 56,341 |
| Grampian | 10,587 | 79,371 |
| Highland | 4,191 | 34,727 |
| Lothian | 20,245 | 101,555 |
| Strathclyde | 40,427 | 359,344 |
| Tayside | 7,952 | 58,275 |
| Orkney | 806 | 3,349 |
| Shetland | 2,620 | 4,116 |
| Western Isles | 2,755 | 4,885 |

### Scottish Nuclear

**Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he intends to contact Sir Donald Miller regarding the assurances the latter received from the right hon. and learned Member for Edinburgh, Pentlands (Mr. Rifkind) when he was Secretary of State for Scotland regarding the independence of Scottish Nuclear. [22065]

**Mr. Kynoch:** My right hon. Friend has no plans at present to do so.

**Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussion he has had with the chairman of Scottish Nuclear regarding the future of that company. [22038]

**Mr. Kynoch:** My right hon. Friend has met Mr. Hann on several occasions in recent weeks to discuss a range of issues concerning Scottish Nuclear Ltd.

### Education Expenditure

**Mrs. Fyfe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the average cost in 1993–94, per pupil, of *(a)* education at a local authority school, *(b)* meals, *(c)* travel and *(d)* any other incidental expense; and what were the all-Scotland totals in each of these categories. [21864]

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Net current expenditure per pupil in local authority nursery, primary, secondary and special schools in Scotland is normally provided, for technical reasons, exclusive of the costs of school meals, home to school transport, central administration and loans charges. The figure on this basis for 1993–94 was £2,379 per pupil and £1.861 billion in total.

The equivalent figures for pupils consuming schools meals were £174 and £61.186 million respectively and for pupils benefiting from free home-to-school transport were £343 and £53.442 million respectively.

These figures have been derived from local authority financial returns which do not include a heading for other incidental expenditure.

### Nuclear Industry

**Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of the asset value of the nuclear energy industry in Scotland. [22037]

**Mr. Kynoch:** Such estimates are a matter for the companies concerned; information on asset values is contained in their annual reports and accounts.

**Mr. McFall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what measurement he has made regarding the security and safety implications of a privatised nuclear energy industry. [22039]

**Mr. Kynoch:** Safety in the nuclear industry, whether in the public or private sectors, is the responsibility of the companies concerned. Civil installations are subject to a licensing regime which is transparent, rigorous and robust. HM nuclear installations inspectorate will continue to administer this regime under the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974 and the relevant statutory provisions. Security of nuclear installations is also a matter for the organisations concerned, in consultation with the appropriate authorities.

## Animal Diseases

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many cases of brucellosis have occurred in each year since 1985. [21821]

**Sir Hector Monro:** There has been only one confirmed brucellosis herd breakdown case in Scotland since 1985. This case occurred in 1989.

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many cases of pleuro-pneumonia occurred in each year since 1985. [22167]

**Sir Hector Monro:** There have been no cases of pleuro-pneumonia recorded in Scotland since 1985.

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many cases of epizootic lymphangitis occurred in each year since 1985. [22179]

**Sir Hector Monro:** There have been no cases of epizootic lymphangitis recorded in Scotland since 1985.

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many cases of paramyxovirus occurred in each year since 1985. [22172]

**Sir Hector Monro:** The number of confirmed cases of paramyxovirus in Scotland for the years in question is as follows:

1985: 10
1986: 8
1987: 67
1988: 10
1989: 44
1990: 61
1991: 6
1992: 31
1993: 22
1994: 7

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many cases of foot and mouth disease occurred in each year since 1978. [22176]

**Sir Hector Monro:** There have been no confirmed cases of foot and mouth disease since 1978.

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the link between rabbits and Johne's disease. [22347]

**Sir Hector Monro:** Mycobacterium paratuberculosis, the causative agent in Johne's disease, has been isolated from wild rabbits in the Perth-Angus area. It is not known whether this is the same strain of bacteria which causes disease in cattle and sheep and further research is being carried out.

## Spottiswoode

**Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what consideration led to the Forestry Commission being allowed to dispose of the wood at Spottiswoode near Westruther in Berwickshire with no provision for protection for future access by the public; [21437]

(2) if he will pay an official visit to Spottiswoode to discuss the extent of use of the wood by the local community; [21438]

(3) what attempts he will now make to secure public assess when the wood at Spottiswoode is offered for sale; and if he will make a statement. [21441]

**Sir Hector Monro:** The Forestry Commission follows guidelines laid down by Ministers before selecting properties for sale. These guidelines take account of all relevant factors, including the existing levels of public access and recreation. The commission considered that the level of public access to Spottiswoode was low and that the wood could be sold. My right hon. Friend does not, therefore, consider it necessary to pay an official visit to Spottiswoode.

The Forestry Commission has already offered to enter into an access agreement with Borders regional council, which would have secured public access in the future, but the council declined the offer.

**Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many school pupils visiting Pyatshaw outdoor centre used the wood at Spottiswoode for educational or recreational purposes over the past five years. [21439]

**Sir Hector Monro:** Pupils visiting the Pyatshaw outdoor centre may make occasional informal use of the wood for recreational purposes, but there is no record of this.

**Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received regarding the disposal of Spottiswoode and its implications for public access. [21440]

**Sir Hector Monro:** My right hon. Friend and I have received representations from the British Horse Society and two individuals about the sale of Spottiswoode and its implications for public access.

# Written Answers to Questions

*Tuesday 9 May 1995*

## CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

### Pensions

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, what steps are being taken to maintain the value of pensions to the clergy.

**Mr. Alison:** Clergy pensions are increased in line with the previous year's national minimum stipend. The most recent increase, which took effect on 1 April 1995, was 3.3 per cent.

On the wider issue of the funding of clergy pensions, a joint paper produced by the Central Board of Finance, the Church Commissioners and the Church of England Pensions Board was recently discussed at a national conference with the chairmen and secretaries of diocesan boards of finance. The draft paper will, after further discussion and refinement, be presented to the General Synod in July. It contains proposals for the establishment of a separate funded pension scheme. It is intended that the proposed arrangements will create a firm basis on which to provide continued security for the clergy in their retirement, as well as leaving sufficient funds to support the national ministry, particularly in poorer dioceses and parishes.

## DUCHY OF LANCASTER

### *Directory of Westminster and Whitehall*

**Mr. Henderson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what were the costs of producing and advertising the 1995 *Directory of Westminster and Whitehall*; and how much revenue the Government estimate will be recouped from sales. [22900]

**Mr. Horam:** HMSO has not produced a 1995 *Directory of Westminster and Whitehall*, although a commercial publication bearing that title is believed to be imminent.

### Historical Documents

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what special training is given to persons who have responsibility for assessing the historical significance of documents held by his Department. [23290]

**Mr. Horam:** Training in assessing the historical significance of departmental records is carried out under the guidance of the Keeper of Public Records. It is provided in a number of different ways, including courses on the appraisal of records and through conferences and seminars arranged by the Public Records Office.

## LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

### Statute of Westminster

**Mr. Mackinlay :** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, pursuant to his answer of 3 May, column *208*, if it is his intention to consult other countries under section 2 of the Statute of Westminster Act 1931 in respect of those aspects of the Regency Act 1937 that are to be varied by the Statute Law (Repeals) Bill *[Lords]* currently before Parliament; and if he will make a statement. [23167]

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** It is not my intention, being advised that no such consultation is necessary or appropriate.

### Public Records

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department on what occasions in the last 30 years he or his predecessors have authorised the deposit of public records in the Churchill archives; and under what provision of the Public Records Act this was done. [22914]

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** Under section 4(1) of the Public Records Act 1958, the Lord Chancellor has the power, now delegated to the Keeper of Public Records, to appoint places of deposit for public records to be kept outside the public Record Office itself. The Churchill archives centre, Cambridge has not been appointed a place of deposit for public records under the Act; it follows that there has been no authorisation under the Act for public records to be deposited there nor are any of the Churchill papers at the Churchill archive centre public records within the meaning of the Act.

## TRANSPORT

### British Transport Police

**Mr. Key:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on progress in discussions between his Department and the Home Office on extending the powers and jurisdiction of the British Transport police. [21565]

**Mr. Watts:** Discussions are continuing.

### Acoustic Fencing (Motorways)

**Mr. Chidgey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what new sections of Britain's motorway network will be covered by acoustic fencing in the next year. [22123]

**Mr. Watts:** This is an operational matter for the Highways Agency. I have asked its chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

*Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mr. David Chidgey, dated 9 May 1995:*

As you know, the Minister for Railways and Roads, Mr John Watts, has asked me to reply to your Parliamentary Question asking the Secretary of State for Transport, what new sections of Britain's motorway network will be covered by acoustic fencing in the next year.

Only schemes which had a start of works prior to April 1995 and are still under construction are included. It is dependent on the contractor's programme and progress.

The total length of Acoustic Barrier programmed to be erected this year on motorway construction schemes is approximately 10.3 miles

**Mr. Chidgey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the total expenditure by his Department in each year since 1990 on acoustic fencing on motorways. [22126]

**Mr. Watts:** This detailed information is not held centrally. It could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

**Mr. Chidgey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the exact locations of the sections of Britain's motorway network that are currently covered by acoustic fencing and the date that each section of acoustic fencing was implemented. [22129]

**Mr. Watts:** The detailed information is not held centrally. It could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

**Mr. Chidgey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are his Department's criteria for the implementation of acoustic fencing on *(a)* motorways and *(b)* other highways. [22130]

**Mr. Watts:** This is an operational matter for the Highways Agency. I have asked its chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

*Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mr. David Chidgey, dated 9 May 1995:*

As you know, the Minister for Railways and Roads, Mr John Watts, has asked me to reply to your Parliamentary Question asking the Secretary of State, what are his Department's criteria for the implementation of acoustic fencing on (a) motorways and (b) other highways.

The criteria for the implementation of acoustic fencing on construction schemes for motorways and trunk roads are the same. Acoustic fences are provided where it is demonstrated that noise levels at a number of adjacent residential properties would otherwise be unreasonably high and that other measures would be less cost effective.

## Compensation (New Roads)

**Mr. Chidgey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many people have submitted a claim in each year since 1990 for compensation for the decrease in property value as a result of the use of a new road from noise, vibration, smell, fumes, smoke, artificial lighting or other causes under part 1 of the Land Compensation Act 1973. [22124]

**Mr. Watts:** This is an operational matter for the Highways Agency. I have asked its chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

*Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mr. David Chidgey, dated 8 May 1995:*

As you know, the Minister for Railways and Roads, Mr John Watts has asked me to reply to your Parliamentary Question asking the Secretary of State for Transport how many people have submitted a claim in each year since 1990 for compensation for decrease in property value as a result of the use of a new road from noise, vibration, smell, fumes, smoke, artificial lighting or other causes under Part 1 of the Land Compensation Act 1973.

This information is not held centrally for Highways Agency schemes and not held at all by the Agency for new road schemes which are the responsibility of other highways authorities. Therefore, I am sorry that this information cannot be provided except at disproportionate cost.

**Mr. Chidgey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what has been the total amount paid by his Department in each year since 1990 for compensation for the decrease in property values as a result of noise from the use of a new road under part 1 of the Land Compensation Act 1973; [22127]

(2) what has been the total amount paid by his Department in each year since 1990 for compensation for the decrease in property values as a result of noise, vibration, smell, fumes smoke, artificial lighting or other causes under part 1 of the Land Compensation Act 1973. [22128]

**Mr. Watts:** These are operational matters for the Highways Agency. I have asked its chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

*Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mr. David Chidgey, dated 9 May 1995:*

As you know, the Minister for Railways and Roads, Mr John Watts, has asked me to reply to your Parliamentary Questions asking the Secretary of State for Transport how much has been paid in each year since 1990 in compensation for decrease in property values under Part 1 of the Land Compensation Act 1973.

Compensation for loss in value is not separately identified from expenditure on acquisition of property in central budgets or expenditure returns. Therefore, I am sorry that this information cannot be provided except at disproportionate cost.

## Accounting Officers

**Mr. Meacher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many times in the last 10 years, and on which dates, his departmental accounting officer has issued a minute in that role; and what was the issue in each case.

**Mr. Norris:** In my reply of 1 March 1994, *Official Report,* column 659 to the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands), I stated that Department records showed that since 1979 there had been no cases where such an instruction had been issued. This is still the case.

## Concessionary Fares (Pensioners)

**Mr. Meacher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has made of the number of old-age pensioners in Great Britain *(a)* who are not provided with full free travel concessions and *(b)* not provided with partial travel concessionary travel passes; and if he will estimate the cost of providing free concessionary fares to all those presently not provided for. [22570]

**Mr. Norris:** It is not possible to give a precise figure for the cost of providing free concessionary fares for all old-age pensioners.

## Minicab Firms

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many unlicensed private hire or minicab firms are known to the Metropolitan police in the London boroughs; and if he will make a statement. [21225]

**Mr. Norris:** I am advised that the Metropolitan police do not keep lists of unlicensed private hire or minicab firms in London; all these firms in the Metropolitan police district are unlicensed.

In February this year, the Government announced their agreement with the Transport Select Committee that minicabs in London should be regulated, Cm 2715, as part of their response to the Committee's recommendations.

### Rail Franchises

**Ms Glenda Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if the French National rail company, Société Nationale des Chemins de Fers, is allowed to submit bids to operate rail franchises in Great Britain. [22913]

**Mr. Watts:** There are no restrictions preventing foreign national rail companies from bidding for franchises.

### Ferry Evacuation

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which are the four British-registered ferries which do not have 100 per cent. dry-shod evacuation; which routes they sail on, and what are the evacuation arrangements on these ferries. [22907]

**Mr. Norris:** This is an operational matter for the Marine Safety Agency. I have asked its chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

*Letter from R. M. Bradley to Mr. Paul Flynn, dated 9 May 1995:*

The Secretary of State for Transport has asked me to reply to your question about four ferries which do not have 100 per cent dry-shod evacuation.

There are four UK registered vessels, which ply on the following routes and have evacuation arrangements as described:

PRIDE OF BRUGES—Dover to Calais.

Lifeboats and Marine Evacuation Systems are provided for 1158 persons and inflatable liferafts with overside ladders for 300 persons. The maximum permitted number of persons on board is 1400.

PRIDE OF CHERBOURG—Portsmouth to Cherbourg.

Lifeboats are provided for 798 persons and inflatable liferafts with overside ladders for 610 persons. The maximum permitted number of persons on board is 1297.

PRIDE OF HAMPSHIRE—Portsmouth to Cherbourg.

Lifeboats are provided for 798 persons and inflatable liferafts with overside ladders for 600 persons. The maximum permitted number of persons on board is 1302.

PIONEER—Plies between ports on the West Coast of Scotland, Western Isles and Northern Ireland. Lifeboats are provided for 80 persons and inflatable liferafts with overside ladders for 275 persons. The maximum permitted number of persons on board is 294.

### Lyme Bay Activity Centre

**Sir James Spicer:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he has taken in respect of the papers on the Lyme bay rescue operation forwarded to him in December 1994 on the direction of the trial judge. [23163]

**Mr. Norris:** HM Coastguard conducted its own internal investigation into the rescue operation. This was made available to the court during the trial of the company owning the activity centre, the managing director and the manager. HM Coastguard took action to discipline certain officers and to improve procedures and performance at the local rescue centre. In the light of the remarks of the trial judge I have asked John Reeder QC to conduct a review with the following terms of reference:

In the light of Coastguard internal inquiry, the evidence presented to the Lyme Bay trial and the judge's comments in his summing up—

(i) to review all the actions, both internal and external taken by Coastguard during and subsequent to the tragedy.

(ii) to consider how far this action was appropriate and whether any further action was necessary, and

(iii) to make recommendations.

Consideration under item (ii) should cover the suggestion by the hon. Member for Dorset, West that harbourmasters should be given a more formal role in Coastguard's emergency procedures.

The findings will be published.

### Liverpool Vehicle Registration Office

**Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representation he has had from employees in the Liverpool vehicle registration office about the closure of the Liverpool office; and if he will make a statement. [23161]

**Mr. Norris:** Four hon. Members in the Liverpool area have drawn my attention to a letter dated 28 March which they received from two representatives of the Civil and Public Services Association on behalf of the staff about the closure of the Liverpool vehicle registration office. I have replied to these and the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency has replied to another. The lease of the accommodation for this office has expired and it formed part of a review of DVLA's local office structure last year, which concluded that vehicle registration offices should close progressively over the next three years, dependent on other arrangements being made for the work of the offices. No firm date has yet been fixed for the closure of the office and the staff will be kept fully informed of any plans to do so, with a minimum of six months' notice.

### Road Safety

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on his Department's policies for reducing death and injury on the roads. [23653]

**Mr. Norris:** We have today published the "Road Safety Report 1995", which describes measures being taken to reduce road accident casualties. Copies have been placed in the Library.

**Dr. John Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to increase the level of funding made available to Cumbria county council for the implementation of road safety schemes; and if he will make a statement. [22737]

**Mr. Norris:** We are making available £50 million to local authorities for local safety schemes in 1995–96. This is planned to rise to £55 million in 1996–97 and to £60 million in 1997–98. The allocation of funds depends on the relative merits of the bid plans put forward by local authorities.

### Historical Documents

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what special training is given to persons who have responsibility for assessing the historical significance of documents held by his Department. [23277]

**Mr. Norris:** Training is provided under the guidance of the Keeper of Public Records. It includes courses on the appraisal of records arranged by the Public Record Office.

### Commercial Vehicle Operators

**Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what guidelines his Department issues to commercial road vehicle operators to effect the reduction of accidents. [22696]

**Mr. Norris:** Advice is given in the Department's "Guide to maintaining roadworthiness", which was produced in conjunction with the operator trade associations. The guide gives operators detailed information on how to set up and run a system for maintaining vehicles in a roadworthy condition.

Vehicle examiners from the Department's Vehicle Inspectorate also give advice to operators, both on an ad hoc basis, and when they visit operators premises in connection with corroborating compliance with the requirements of operator licensing.

**Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to encourage commercial road vehicle operators to undertake specialist driver training. [22690]

**Mr. Norris:** We have no such plans, but specialist training is a statutory requirement for drivers of vehicles carrying dangerous goods.

### Private Finance Initiative

**Mr. Simpson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of his Department's budget is allocated to initiatives which have been undertaken to secure private finance for his Department's projects. [22792]

**Mr. Norris:** Attracting private finance for infrastructure investment affects policy work throughout the Department and the related expenditure cannot meaningfully be estimated in isolation.

### Road Accident Statistics

**Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to include causal factors in his Department's road accident statistics. [22689]

**Mr. Norris:** There are no plans to include causal factors in the Department's national road accident statistics. The Department is conducting research to evaluate the provision of causation factors in local area road accident statistics.

### Passenger Coaches

**Mr. Spellar:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 28 April, *Official Report*, column *771*, what percentage of passenger coaches checked at the roadside or on operators' premises were found to be defective in each of the last two years. [22802]

**Mr. Norris:** Ten per cent. of coaches at the roadside in 1993–94 and 9.2 per cent. in 1992–93 were found to have prohibitable defects.

Of coaches checked at operators' premises as part of a maintenance assessment, 8.7 per cent. were found to have prohibitable defects in 1993–94 as opposed to 8.5 per cent. in the previous year.

### Heavy Goods Vehicles

**Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to make heavy goods vehicles safer. [22703]

**Mr. Norris:** There are already stringent controls regulating both the construction and use requirements of vehicles, which are continually being upgraded in line with technological improvements. Compliance with these requirements is checked at annual roadworthiness tests and enforcement spot checks both at the roadside and at operators' premises.

We also regulate vehicle maintenance through the operator licensing system and have a continuing programme of research directed at the development of new standards to help reduce the number and severity of accidents.

### Air Traffic Control

**Ms Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on what basis air traffic control facilities for commercial flights are shared with the military airspace. [22394]

**Mr. Norris:** Military air traffic services are currently provided primarily at the West Drayton and Prestwick ATC centres. Military controllers are responsible for providing the greater part of air traffic services to aircraft outside controlled airspace—be they military or civil, including general aviation.

**Ms Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to make an announcement in respect of the future of the national air traffic services, and if he will make a statement. [22396]

**Mr. Norris:** The Secretary of State announced in November 1994 that the Government continued to favour privatisation of the national air traffic services in principle, but that further work was needed on a number of important issues before any final decision could be made on whether to proceed with the privatisation. In addition, the Secretary of State is considering the report of the Transport Select Committee on this subject and will be making a formal response in the near future.

### Joint Aviation Authority

**Mr. Jim Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what parliamentary approval will be required prior to the introduction of the JAA proposals on European regulations for flight and duty times; [21879]

(2) what assessment he has made of the representations he has received from the British Airline Pilots Association relating to the JAA proposals on flight and duty times; [21881]

(3) when he last met the head of the Civil Aviation Authority to discuss the JAA proposals for European regulations on flight and duty times; what assessment he has made of the stringency of the proposals; and if the JAA proposals are equivalent to the current CAA regulations; [21880]

(4) to what extent the JAA proposals for regulations on flight and duty times will be extended to airports outside London; and how these proposals will be financed. [21882]

**Mr. Norris:** The Air Navigation Order sets annual and monthly limits on flight times for flight crews. Within those limits, the order requires operators to establish a flight time limitation scheme which has to be approved by the Civil Aviation Authority subject to such conditions as they think fit. The CAA's advice on how to formulate an acceptable flight time limitation scheme is contained in civil aviation publication 371. The JAA's present proposals do not affect the provisions of the Air Navigation Order and could be implemented in the United Kingdom by amending the advice in CAP 371. In the longer term, the proposals should come before the European Council for adoption as an EC regulation.

Specific responsibility for, and expertise in, flight and duty time limitation schemes rests with the CAA's flight operations policy section. My noble Friend the Minister for Aviation last met the head of this section to discuss the JAA proposals on 28 February 1995. The British Air Line Pilots Association has expressed concern about certain aspects of the JAA proposals which differ from the advice contained in CAP 371, but the CAA stresses that flight time limitation schemes have to be seen as an overall "package" of measures. The CAA is satisfied that the JAA proposals would achieve a comparable level of protection against the onset of fatigue to the current UK requirements.

The cost of crew scheduling in accordance with any flight and duty time limitation scheme is borne by individual operators.

### Stockport Bypass

**Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his new revised timetable for the building and completion of the A6(M) Stockport north-south bypass. [21993]

**Mr. Watts:** This is an operational matter for the Highways Agency. I have asked its chief executive to write to my hon. Friend.

*Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Sir Thomas Arnold, dated 9 May 1995:*

The Minister for Railways and Roads, Mr John Watts, has asked me to reply to your Parliamentary Question asking the Secretary of State for Transport, what is his revised timetable for the building and completion of the A6(M) Stockport North-South Bypass.

The next stage for this scheme will be the publication of Orders followed by a public inquiry. It will take us some time to prepare for this and at this stage I cannot give you an indication of the dates. Progress of the scheme will be dependent on detailed investigations, design work, statutory procedures and availability of resources. I hope you will understand that these uncertainties preclude me from making any worthwhile predictions about the programme in the longer term.

### Noise Pollution

**Mr. Chidgey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration his Department gives to minimising noise pollution when selecting the type of surfacing for a motorway under construction or repair. [22125]

**Mr. Watts:** This is a operational matter for the Highways Agency. I have asked its chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

*Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mr. David Chidgey, dated 9 May 1995:*

As you know, the Minister of Railways and Roads, Mr John Watts, has asked me to reply to your Parliamentary Question asking the Secretary of State for Transport, what consideration his Department gives to minimising noise pollution when selecting the type of surfacing for a motorway under construction or repair.

The permitted alternatives for the surfacing of motorway construction schemes are constrained where noise is a matter of concern. Concrete surfaces are not currently used where traffic is expected to exceed 75,000 vehicles per day, although quieter concrete surfaces are undergoing trials. In particular sensitive situations, porous asphalt may be specified as a noise mitigation measure when the additional cost of construction and maintenance are considered to be justified. But porous asphalt is not technically suitable for use in all cases.

It is not the Agency's policy to apply mitigation to existing roads.

### Special Advisers

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 1 May, *Official Report*, column *61*, if he will make a statement on the possible conflicts of interest involving special advisers, listing the names of the individuals, the nature of the conflicts concerned and how the matters were resolved. [22906]

**Mr. Norris:** It is not my practice to comment on information about the private interests of staff.

### Baggage Checks

**Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of hold baggage passing through Heathrow airport is now subject to regular checking; and what was the percentage immediately before the Lockerbie bombing. [23184]

**Mr. Norris:** All hold baggage passing through Heathrow airport for international flights is subjected to a range of security controls. All such baggage must be accounted for and authorised, passengers are questioned about their baggage and, in addition, an increasing proportion of baggage is screened by X-ray or other technology.

Good progress is being made towards the Department's objective of screening 100 per cent. of international hold baggage. The percentage of hold baggage currently being subjected to screening by X-ray or other technology is approximately 26 per cent., although 100 per cent. of hold baggage on those flights considered to be at greater risk is screened. It is estimated that about 4 to 5 per cent. of hold baggage was being screened prior to the Lockerbie bombing.

### Telephones

**Mr. Donohoe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what use his Department makes of hand-held and car-based mobile telephones; what were the costs for each financial year of these services since mobile telephones were first introduced to his Department; and how many mobile telephones are currently in use. [23447]

**Mr. Norris:** The Department has 351 hand-held mobile telephones and 25 car telephones. The equipment is issued on the basis of operational need, especially where staff have to work away from the office. The main users of the equipment are staff in the Coastguard agency, the Highways Agency, the Vehicle Inspectorate, the aircraft

accidents investigation branch and ministerial offices. Figures are not available centrally for annual operating costs.

**Mr. Donohoe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many mobile telephones being utilised by his Department have been cloned during the last 12 months. [23429]

**Mr. Norris:** Four hand-held telephones were cloned during the last 12 months.

**Mr. Donohoe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations his Department has made to the Department of Trade and Industry concerning the need for legislation to prevent the cloning of mobile telephones. [23468]

**Mr. Norris:** No representations have been made to the DTI concerning the need for legislation to prevent the cloning of mobile telephones.

**Mr. Donohoe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what costs his Department has incurred during the last 12 months as a result of cloning of mobile telephones being utilised by his Department, with particular reference to the making of unauthorised calls. [23487]

**Mr. Norris:** The cost of unauthorised calls made due to cloning is estimated at £500. However, this is not a cost to the Department as all mobile telephone airtime suppliers accept that the costs of unauthorised calls on cloned telephones are not charged to users.

**Mr. Donohoe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps his Department has taken to prevent the cloning of telephones being utilised by his Department; and if his Department has discussed this matter with any official agencies. [23453]

**Mr. Norris:** Cloning of existing analogue phones is impossible to prevent. However, mobile telephone airtime suppliers have mechanisms in place to detect suspicious activity and the majority of clonings are detected early enough to stop serious misuse. No discussions have been held with official agencies. My Department has a policy of migration from the old analogue telephones, which are susceptible to cloning, to the new digital networks on which cloning is technically impossible.

### Track Access Charges

**Mr. Meacher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the track access charge per mile charged in April 1994; and if he will list each change in the charge per mile since that date, and the date when each change was made. [23400]

**Mr. Watts:** Initial access charges were entered into between the British Railways Board and Railtrack and came into effect on 1 April 1994. These charges, contained in unregulated access agreements comprised of a variable charge for track usage and traction current and fixed element and cannot be expressed as charges per mile.

Since that time, new access agreements have been entered between Railtrack and the train operating companies subject to the approval of the rail regulator. The regulator's approach to the approval of track access charges was set out in policy statements published in November 1994, January and February 1995 copies of which are in the House of Commons Library.

## TREASURY

### Barings Bank

**Mr. MacShane:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussions he has had with the Governor of the Bank of England about the latter's allegation of criminal offences committed by Barings executives. [21129]

**Mr. Nelson:** My right hon. and learned Friend has regular meetings with the Governor, at which a wide range of issues is discussed.

### Banking Supervision

**Mr. MacShane:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he will take to regulate the speculation in derivatives by United Kingdom based banks and their offices overseas. [21177]

**Mr. Nelson:** Responsibility for supervising all activities of United Kingdom authorised banks, including their overseas' operations, rests with the Banks of England, where appropriate in collaboration with other regulators in the UK or overseas.

### Inland Revenue

**Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) which activities of the Inland Revenue are currently outsourced to overseas countries; and to which countries this work is sent; [22137]

(2) what plans he has to outsource further activities of the Inland Revenue to overseas countries; which activities these plans cover; and to which countries this work will go. [22136]

**Sir George Young:** No Inland Revenue activities have been outsourced to overseas countries and there are no plans to do so in the future.

**Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many short-term contracts at each Inland Revenue office in the United Kingdom are due to expire in the next 12 months. [22141]

**Sir George Young:** The information is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

**Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many civil servants, including those on short-term contracts, he expects to be employed by the Inland Revenue in *(a)* one year, *(b)* two years and *(c)* five years. [22135]

**Sir George Young:** The Inland Revenue expects to employ mostly permanent staff for the foreseeable future. Some staff are expected to be employed on a short-term or casual basis, but the pattern of need for the next five years cannot be predicted with any accuracy at this stage.

**Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how many civil servants, including those on short-term contracts, are currently employed at each Inland Revenue offices in the United Kingdom; [22166]

(2) how many civil servants are currently employed on short-term contracts at each Inland Revenue office in the United Kingdom. [22142]

**Sir George Young:** The information requested has today been placed in the Library.

**Mr. McCartney:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will define short-term contract in the context of a contract of employment with the Inland Revenue. [22140]

**Sir George Young:** There is no specific definition of a short-term contract with the Inland Revenue. In essence, a short-term contract could be any form of contract which does not result in the employee becoming a permanent civil servant.

### Tax Regime

**Ms Corston:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what programme of research he proposes to introduce to assess the impact of macro-economic, taxation and other policies on family wellbeing and inequalities and poverty, with particular reference to women, as agreed in the programme of action resolved at the world summit for social development, article 27a. [22271]

**Sir George Young:** My right hon. and learned Friend keeps the tax regime and its impact on the economy and particular groups under continual review. As a result of our policies the average income of all economic groups and family types has risen since we came into office in 1979.

### PRODCOM Statistics

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which organisations have purchased the collected PRODCOM statistics in electronic form and may market the data to the public; and if he will make a statement. [22615]

**Mr. Nelson:** Taylor Nelson AGB plc is currently the only organisation to have purchased the PRODCOM statistics. It is permitted to market the data in hard copy, CD-ROM and facsimile formats only.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which organisations were invited to tender for marketing the PRODCOM statistics. [22613]

**Mr. Nelson:** Five organisations submitted marketing proposals to the Central Statistical Office for PRODCOM data. These proposals were submitted on a commercial-in-confidence basis.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will ensure that when PRODCOM statistics are located in libraries, the public will be enabled to photocopy them. [22611]

**Mr. Nelson:** In accordance with the normal conventions on copyright, photocopying of PRODCOM data will be permitted for non-commercial use.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he takes to ensure that there is minimum delay in public access to PRODCOM statistics. [22614]

**Mr. Nelson:** PRODCOM statistics are released for publication as soon as the CSO is satisfied with their quality. They are published by Taylor Nelson AGB as soon as practicable thereafter.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the PRODCOM statistics were first collected; how much of the first year's data in the series has been published; and when the first year's total data will be published. [22612]

**Mr. Nelson:** The first PRODCOM data were collected on a quarterly basis from April 1993 and on an annual basis from January 1994 onwards. In all, publishable PRODCOM data spans 90 annual and 34 quarterly reports. Of these, 84 annual and 28 quarterly have been published to date; the remaining 12 are due to be published by the end of May 1995.

### Bretton Woods Institutions

**Mr. MacShane:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer with whom and with what organisations he is consulting in regard to Govnerment policy on the work and structures of the International Monetary Fund and World bank prior to the 50th anniversary conferences of the Bretton Woods institutions. [22436]

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke:** The 50th anniversary conference of the Bretton Woods institutions took place in September 1994 prior to 1994 annual meetings of the World bank and IMF. I refer the hon. Member to my answer of 19 October to the hon. member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) *Official Report*, column *272–74*.

### Income Tax

**Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the effects on *(a)* inflation, *(b)* interest rates and *(c)* the balance of payments according to the Treasury model for the years 1996 to 2000, consequent upon a 2p reduction in the basic rate of income tax in April 1996, assuming no changes in other given exogenous factors. [22443]

**Mr Nelson** *[holding answer 4 May 1995]:* Since 1978, it has not been the practice to provide results from the Treasury model in response to parliamentary questions, but the hon. Member will be aware that the model is available for Members' use through the Library of the House.

### Accounting Officers

**Mr. Meacher:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many times in the last 10 years, and on which dates, his departmental accounting officer has issued a minute in that role; and what was the issue in each case. [22558]

**Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** Where a Minster overrules an accounting officer's advice on an issue of propriety or regularity or one of value for money, the accounting officer should request a written instruction from the Minister to take the action in question. No such instructions have been issued during the last 10 years.

All such instructions are now reported to the Comptroller and Auditor General who, after making whatever investigations he considers appropriate, will report his finding to the Public Accounts Committee.

## PRIME MINISTER

### Engagements

**Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 9 May 1995. [21898]

**Sir Peter Tapsell:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 9 May. [21899]

**Mr. Newton:** I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is currently on an official visit to Moscow as part of the VE day commemorations.

### Bank Holidays

**Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Prime Minister which of his Ministers has responsibility for designation of bank holidays in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* England, *(c)* Wales and *(d)* Northern Ireland. [22820]

**The Prime Minister:** Bank holidays are designated in the Banking and Financial Dealings Act 1971. Power to vary the specified dates or to designate additional dates is exercisable by Her Majesty by royal proclamation or in the case of Northern Ireland by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. By virtue of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's overall responsibility for the 1971 Act, the Treasury currently co-ordinates advice on any designations for royal proclamation in consultation with other Departments as necessary.

### St. Paul's Angels' Nursery

**Mr. McNamara:** To ask the Prime Minister if he expects to make a further visit to St. Paul's Angels' nursery before September. [23132]

**The Prime Minister:** I currently have no plans to do so.

### Public Records

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will introduce legislation to prohibit individuals, acting in a private capacity, from charging for the reproduction of any document or other material produced directly or indirectly in the service of the Crown. [23069]

**The Prime Minister:** No. Such legislation is not necessary. It is already the law, under section 163 of the Copyright, Design and Patents Act 1988, that Crown copyright subsists in any work made by an officer or servant of the Crown in the course of his or her duties.

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will publish the whole of the correspondence with the Churchill family and their advisers relating to the expenditure of £13.5 million on the purchase of public and other records created during Sir Winston Churchill's periods of office as well as the records of all meetings of the commission with the Churchill Trust to discuss the matter. [23070]

**The Prime Minister:** No, it is not my normal practice to publish private correspondence.

Contrary to the impression given in the question, no public records were purchased. The national lottery memorial fund funded the purchase of non-state papers; the Government have transferred the state papers so that the whole archive is preserved, intact, at Churchill college.

### Historical Documents

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Prime Minister what special training is given to persons who have responsibility for assessing the historical significance of documents held by his Department. [23280]

**The Prime Minister:** Training and assessing the historical significance of departmental records is carried out under guidance of the Keeper of Public Records. It is provided in a number of different ways, including courses on the appraisal of records and through conferences and seminars arranged by the Public Record Office.

## TRADE AND INDUSTRY

### Offshore Oil and Gas Structures

**Mr. Clappison:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he intends to publish guidelines relating to the abandonment of offshore oil and gas structures. [23517]

**Mr. Eggar:** The Department issued detailed guidelines on Thursday 4 May. Copies have been placed in the Library of the House.

### Executive Salaries

**Mr. Norman Hogg:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proposals he has to introduce statutory controls over the salaries of senior executives. [21632]

**Mr. John Owen Jones:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proposals he has to introduce statutory controls over the salaries of senior executives. [21634]

**Mr. Jonathan Evans:** Sir Richard Greenbury's committee is considering the structure within which remuneration for directors of public companies is determined and disclosed. Once it has made its recommendations, the Government will consider whether any of these should be reinforced by legislative change. But executive salary levels and details of remuneration packages are matters for individual companies and their shareholders. It is not for the Government to intervene in these decisions or to limit companies' ability to pay competitive salaries.

### Small Businesses

**Mr. Hutton:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement about his Department's policy towards promoting employment in small businesses. [21644]

**Mr. Page:** The Government fully recognise and appreciate the importance of small businesses to the economy and the vital contribution they make to job creation.

The Government encourage the role played by small businesses in job creation by creating an economic environment in which they can flourish and grow. This includes stabilising interest rates and inflation and reducing legislative and administrative burdens.

My Department is developing a network of business links based on partnerships between local authorities, TECs, chambers of commerce, and enterprise agencies, to develop a wide range of high-quality business support services, particularly to businesses with the potential for growth.

It is my intention that the wide range of services delivered by my Department will be available through the business link network.

### British Beef Co. Ltd.

**Mrs. Helen Jackson:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what were the outstanding liabilities of British Beef when it went into receivership. [22606]

**Mr. Jonathan Evans:** British Beef Co. Ltd. went into administrative receivership on 23 March 1995. The joint receivers have informed my officials that the directors estimated the realisable value of the company's assets at that date to be £14 million and that secured creditors were owed £8.5 million, preferential creditors £0.75 million and unsecured creditors £6 million.

### Copyright and Rights of Performers Regulations 1995

**Mr. Key:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received from representatives of the performing arts about the draft Copyright and Rights of Performers Regulations 1995; and if he will make a statement. [21567]

**Mr. Ian Taylor:** About 500 representations have been received in response to the consultative draft of these regulations issued by my Department with a request for comments by 28 April. Some 460 of these were from representatives of the performing arts, the great majority being from individual performers belonging to the Musicians Union or other performers' organisations and expressed in near identical terms. The remainder of the submissions were from other interested parties, most in the form of responses by national organisations replying on behalf of all their members. I am considering all the representations received and will in due course lay a statutory instrument before Parliament under the affirmative resolution procedure.

### Accounting Officers

**Mr. Meacher:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many times in the last 10 years, and on which dates, his departmental accounting officer has issued a minute in that role; and what was the issue in each case. [22557]

**Mr. Heseltine:** Where a Minister overrules an accounting officer's advice on an issue of propriety or regularity or one of value for money the accounting officer should request a written instruction from the Minister to take the action in question.

The cases where such an instruction has been issued were set out in the reply given to the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) on 8 March 1994, *Official Report*, column *211*. No new cases have arisen since then.

All such instructions are reported to the Comptroller and Auditor General who, after making whatever investigations he considers appropriate, will report his findings to the Public Accounts Committee.

### Public Records

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 2 May, column *131*, to what extent *(a)* professional historians and *(b)* qualified archivists are involved at any stage in the 10-year and 25-year sifts. [22939]

**Mr. Heseltine:** (a) When the Department needs the advice of a professional historian, it obtains this via the Public Record Office, which maintains close links with the academic community.

(b) Those staff at the Public Record Office whose role is to guide and inspect the work of my Department's records review section include one qualified archivist who carries out checks on 10-year sifts and two to three qualified archivists who are involved with the 25-year reviews.

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 2 May, column *131*, what special training is given to persons who have responsibility for assessing the historical significance of documents held by his Department. [22940]

**Mr. Heseltine:** The Department provides internal, on-the-job training for records review staff, who are also supported by on-the-job coaching from qualified archivist staff from the Public Record Office. The Department also avails itself of formal training courses, annual conferences and special seminars provided by the Public Records Office.

### Private Finance Initiative

**Mr. Simpson:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade, what percentage of his Department's budget is allocated to initiatives which have been undertaken to secure private finance for his Department's projects. [22793]

**Mr. Heseltine:** The private finance initiative within the DTI is one of the responsibilities of the MINIS—management information system for Ministers—unit within the finance and resource management division of my Department. This unit is expected to cost £249,000 in 1995–96 against a total gross running costs provision of £318,883,000.

### Brent Spar Oil Platform

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations have been received by Her Majesty's Government in regard to the permission given to Shell to scuttle the Brent Spar oil platform in the Atlantic. [22928]

**Mr. Eggar:** Under the terms of section 1(3) of the Petroleum Act 1987, Shell UK Exploration and Production was required to consult a number of interested parties about its abandonment programme for the Brent Spar installation. Replies were received from the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Scottish Natural Heritage, the Scottish Fishermen's Federation and British Telecom International.

Since I approved the programme, Greenpeace has made representations to my right hon. Friend the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

## AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

### Bovine Somatotropin

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what surveys and investigations he has conducted into the acceptability of the use of synthetic BST in milk among *(a)* farmers and *(b)* consumers.

**Mrs. Browning** *[holding answer 1 May 1995]:* A formal consultation of over 200 organisations and individuals, including farmers and consumer groups was conducted last year seeking views on the future availability of BST products. A copy of the responses received is available from the main Ministry library in Whitehall place. We have also received a number of representations on the subject via hon. Members and direct from both farmers and consumers. In addition, the subject has been raised at farmers and consumer meetings which my ministerial colleagues, have attended around the country.

### Public Bodies

**Dr. Wright:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which of the advisory non-departmental public bodies sponsored by his Department are under a statutory requirement to *(a)* publish their advice to *(b)* publish an annual report and *(c)* lay an annual report before Parliament; and if he will list those with a statutory base. [21598]

**Mr. Jack** *[holding answer 28 April 1995]:* The information is as follows:

(a) None, but in practice a number do.

(b) Only the Veterinary Products Committee is required to publish an annual report, but the Advisory Committee on Pesticides and the Food Advisory Committee also do so.

(c) None.

The following advisory non-departmental public bodies have a statutory basis:

The Advisory Committee on Pesticides
The Agricultural Dwelling House Advisory Committees
The Consumers' Committee for Great Britain
The Committee of Investigation for Great Britain
The Committee on Agricultural Valuation
The Hill Farming Advisory Committee
The Veterinary Products Committee.

### Fish Farming, Wiltshire

**Mr. Key:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the business name and address of each site at which fish are farmed in the country of Wiltshire. [21566]

**Mr. Jack:** All fish farming businesses are required to register with MAFF for disease control purposes under the Registration of Fish and Shellfish Farming Businesses Order 1985 made under the Diseases of Fish Act 1983. There are currently 25 fish farm sites registered in the country of Wiltshire.

Under the terms of the Act, information obtained for disease control purposes relating to the particulars of any one person or business may be disclosed only in certain specified circumstances. I regret that I am therefore unable to provide details of the business name and address of each site at which fish are farmed.

### Coastal Erosion

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will institute a comprehensive technical survey of the coastline between Flimby and Silloth with a view to establishing the scale of coastal erosion arising from tidal action in poor weather conditions. [22537]

**Mr. Jack:** This Department commissioned a survey of coast protection works and eroding coastlines in England in 1993 and the then Minister, my right hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, South-West (Mrs. Shephard), announced it publication by written answer on 30 March 1994, *Official Report*, column *774*. A copy of the report on the survey was placed in the Library of the House.

More detailed studies of coastal erosion in local areas are the responsibility of the relevant coast protection authority, which for the coastline between Flimby and Silloth is the borough of Allerdale council. I understand that the council intends to prepare a plan for the future management of the shoreline in its area, taking account of coastal erosion patterns. This Department may provide grant aid for studies leading to the preparation of such shoreline management plans or to proposals for improved coastal defences.

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received from Crosscanonby parish council as to coastal erosion on the west Cumbrian coast. [22538]

**Mr. Jack:** We have no record of any such representations from Crosscanonby parish council having been received by this Department.

### Accounting Officers

**Mr. Meacher:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many times in the last 10 years, and on which dates, his departmental accounting officer has issued a minute in that role; and what was the issue in each case. [22559]

**Mr. Waldegrave:** Where a Minister overrules an accounting officer's advice on an issue of propriety or regularity or one of value for money, the accounting officer should request a written instruction from the Minister to take the action in question.

The cases in which such an instruction has been issued between 1979 and February 1994 were set out in my reply to the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) on 25 February 1994, *Official Report*, column *496*.

No such minutes have been subsequently issued by the accounting officer,

All such instructions are now reported to the Comptroller and Auditor General who, after making whatever investigations he considers appropriate, will report his findings to the Committee of Public Accounts.

### Private Finance Initiative

**Mr. Simpson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what percentage of his Department's budget is allocated to initiatives which have been undertaken to secure private finance for his Department's projects. [22797]

**Mr. Jack:** At present, a modest proportion of the resources of my financial policy division, my building and estate management division and some other divisions with significant capital budgets are devoted to this initiative.

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

### National Vocational Qualifications

**Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many, and what proportion of, vacancies advertised by his Department, and by each of his Department's agencies, in the last three years have listed the attainment of national vocational qualifications as an acceptable entry requirement; and, of those, how many have required (i) level 1 NVQs, (ii) level 2 NVQs, (iii) level 3 NVQs and (iv) other level NVQs. [22973]

**Mr. Goodlad:** My Department and its agencies have not listed the attainment of NVQs in advertised vacancies as an acceptable entry requirement in the last three years.

For those vacancies where academic qualifications are an entry requirement, the Department accepts GCSEs and equivalent qualifications including NVQs.

### Military Training Assistance Scheme

**Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the annual cost to his Department of UK military training assistance scheme in each of the last five financial years. [23242]

**Mr. David Davis:** The annual cost of the United Kingdom military training assistance scheme for the last five financial years was:

1990–91: £18.1 million
1991–92: £15.2 million
1992–93: £12.5 million
1993–94: £11.9 million
1994–95: £12.1 million (forecast outturn)

**Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those countries which have benefited from the United Kingdom military training assistance scheme since 1 June 1990. [23247]

**Mr. David Davis:** The countries which have benefited from United Kingdom military training assistance since 1 June 1990 are Albania, Algeria, Angola, Antigua, Argentina, Bahamas, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belize, Botswana, Brazil, British Virgin Islands, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, Czech Republic, Dominica, Ecuador, Egypt, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Lithuania, Macedonia, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Mauritius, Mexico, Montserrat, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Romania, Russia, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, South Korea, Sri Lanka, St. Kitts, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Thailand, Trinidad, Turkey, Turks and Caicos, Uganda, Ukraine, Uruguay, Venezuela, Yemen, Zaire, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

### Entry Clearance

**Dr. Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, how many entry clearance officers were in post in *(a)* New York, *(b)* Moscow, *(c)* St. Petersburg, *(d)* Accra, *(e)* Lagos, *(f)* Abuja, *(g)* New Delhi, *(h)* Bombay, *(j)* Calcutta, *(k)* Madras, *(l)* Dhaka, *(m)* Islamabad, *(n)* Karachi and *(o)* Colombo in the financial years (i) 1992–93, (ii) 1993–94 and (iii) 1994–95 to the latest convenient date. [22646]

**Mr. Baldry:** The number of entry clearance officers at the posts listed, for the calender years 1992, 1993 and 1994, is given in man years as follows:

| | *1992* | *1993* | *1994* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *(a)* New York | 2.9 | 1.42 | 3.00 |
| *(b)* Moscow | 5.13 | 3.81 | 4.90 |
| *(c)* St. Petersburg | — | 1.75 | 1.80 |
| *(d)* Accra | 5.64 | 4.83 | 4.96 |
| *(e)* Lagos | 19 | 17.67 | 14.33 |
| *(f)* Abuja | — | — | 1.58 |
| *(g)* New Delhi | 15.41 | 14.95 | 14.42 |
| *(h)* Bombay | 14.21 | 11.9 | 11.54 |
| *(j)* Calcutta | 1.45 | 1.4 | 1.17 |
| *(k)* Madras | 1.8 | 1.6 | 1.4 |
| *(l)* Dhaka | 17.5 | 12.3 | 12.08 |
| *(m)* Islamabad | 28.34 | 27.25 | 25.77 |
| *(n)* Karachi | 6.63 | 6.5 | 6.15 |
| *(o)* Colombo | 3.72 | 3.64 | 3.56 |

It should be noted that St. Petersburg and Abuja only started entry clearance work in November 1993 and February 1994 respectively.

**Dr. Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what were the costs of the entry clearance work at each post in the Indian subcontinent in *(a)* 1992–93, *(b)* 1993–94 and *(c)* 1994–95; what they are forecast to be in (i) 1995–96 and (ii) 1996–97; and how they are calculated. [22644]

**Mr. Baldry:** The costs of entry clearance work at each post are shown on the table.

These reflect the numbers and grades of staff, both UK-based and locally engaged, employed on entry clearance as a proportion of total staff at post.

£

| | *1992–93 (actual)* | *1993–94 (actual)* | *1994–95 (estimated)* | *1995–96 (estimated)* | *1996–97 (estimated)* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Dhaka | 1,787,816 | 1,561,703 | 1,592,937 | 1,644,708 | 1,685,825 |
| Bombay | 1,322,867 | 1,558,321 | 1,589,487 | 1,641,146 | 1,682,174 |
| Calcutta | 142,081 | 171,963 | 175,402 | 181,103 | 185,630 |
| Madras | 185,274 | 139,985 | 142,785 | 147,425 | 151,111 |
| New Delhi | 1,978,335 | 2,029,036 | 2,069,617 | 2,136,879 | 2,190,301 |
| Karachi | 766,278 | 897,589 | 915,541 | 945,296 | 968,928 |
| Islamabad | 2,771,472 | 3,196,424 | 3,260,352 | 3,366,314 | 3,450,472 |
| Colombo | 467,302 | 502,117 | 512,159 | 528,805 | 542,025 |

**Dr. Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what were the costs of the entry clearance work at the British posts in *(a)* New York, *(b)* Moscow, *(c)* St. Petersburg, *(d)* Accra,

*(e)* Lagos and *(f)* Abuja, in the financial years (i) 1992–93, (ii) 1993–94 and (iii) 1994–95; what are they forecast to be in (i) 1995–96 and (ii) 1996–97; and how they are calculated. [22645]

**Mr. Baldry:** The cost of entry clearance work at each post are shown on the table.

These reflect the numbers and grades of staff, both UK-based and locally engaged, employed on entry clearance as a proportion of total staff at post.

£

| | *1992–93 (actual)* | *1993–94 (actual)* | *1994–95 (estimated)* | *1995–96 (estimated)* | *1996–97 (estimated)* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| New York | 551,923 | 699,399 | 713,387 | 736,572 | 754,986 |
| Moscow | 742,955 | 770,194 | 785,598 | 811,130 | 831,408 |
| St. Petersburg | 83,195 | 212,582 | 216,834 | 223,881 | 229,478 |
| Accra | 357,376 | 519,756 | 530,151 | 547,381 | 561,066 |
| Lagos / Abuja | 2,873,715 | 2,798,959 | 2,854,938 | 2,947,724 | 3,021,417 |

**Dr. Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many entry clearance officers in *(a)* New York, *(b)* Moscow, *(c)* St. Petersburg, *(d)* Accra, *(e)* Lagos, *(f)* Abuja, *(g)* New Delhi, *(h)* Bombay, *(j)* Calcutta, *(k)* Madras, *(l)* Dhaka, *(m)* Islamabad, *(n)* Karachi and *(o)* Colombo have other duties; and what proportion of their time, respectively, is spent on these. [22639]

**Mr. Baldry:** The number of entry clearance officers in the following posts with other duties; and the percentage of their time spent on them is as follows:

| | *Number* | *ECO per cent.* | *Other per cent.* |
|---|---|---|---|
| St. Petersburg | 1 | 90 | 10 |
| Abuja | 1 | 50 | 50 |
| Calcutta | 1 | 75 | 25 |
| Madras | 2 | 70 | 30 |
| Colombo | 2 | 80 | 20 |
| Colombo | 2 | 98 | 2 |

All other Entry Clearance Officers are 100 per cent. engaged on entry clearance work.

**Dr. Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many applications for visit entry clearance were *(a)* made, *(b)* granted and *(c)* refused at the British post in Kingston, Jamaica in (i) January to June 1993, (ii) July to December 1993, (iii) January to June 1994 and (iv) July to December or the latest convenient date in 1994. [22640]

**Mr. Baldry:** We do not have a half-yearly breakdown of the details requested.

The number of UK applications for entry clearance—both settlement and non-settlement—made, granted and refused in 1993 and 1994 at Kingston was as follows:

| | *Number* |
|---|---|
| *1993* | |
| Applied | 2,835 |
| Granted | 2,044 |
| Refused | 804 |
| *1994* | |
| Applied | 4,026 |
| Granted | 2,978 |
| Refused | 1,034 |

**Dr. Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many applications for visit entry clearance were *(a)* made, *(b)* granted, and *(c)* refused at the British posts in (i) Ottawa, (ii) Moscow, (iii) Wellington and (iv) Canberra in (1) January to June 1993, (2) July to December 1993, (3) January to June 1994 and (4) July to December or the latest convenient date in 1994. [22642]

**Mr. Baldry:** We do not have a half-yearly breakdown of the number of the details requested.

The number of applications for visit entry clearance made, granted and refused in 1993 and 1994 at the posts listed was as follows:

| | *1993* | | | *1994* | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *A* | *G* | *R* | *A* | *G* | *R* |
| 1) Ottawa | 8,808 | 8,241 | 19 | 10,019 | 9,937 | 51 |
| 2) Moscow | 61,184 | 59,591 | 1,593 | 86,520 | 84,664 | 1,856 |
| 3) Wellington | — | — | — | 1,995 | 2,720 | 28 |
| 4) Canberra | 11,593 | 11,076 | 16 | 17,317 | 16,065 | 12 |

It should be noted that Wellington started entry clearance work in February 1994.

**Dr. Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many applications for visit entry clearance were *(a)* made, *(b)* granted and *(c)* refused at the British posts in (i) Manila, (ii) Tokyo, (iii) Sana'a and (iv) Addis Ababa in (1) January to June 1993, (2) July to December 1993, (3) January to June 1994 and (4) July to December or the latest convenient date in 1994. [22643]

**Mr. Baldry:** We do not have a half-yearly breakdown of the details requested.

The number of UK applications for visit entry clearance made, granted and refused in 1993 and 1994 at the posts listed was as follows:

| | *1993* | | | *1994* | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *A* | *G* | *R* | *A* | *G* | *R* |
| (1) Manila | 12,633 | 11,388 | 911 | 13,292 | 12,384 | 772 |
| (2) Tokyo | 4,080 | 3,865 | 36 | 4,548 | 4,294 | 176 |
| (3) Sana'a | 4,210 | 3,802 | 158 | 3,217 | 2,824 | 169 |
| (4) Addis Ababa | 4,642 | 3,572 | 551 | 4,491 | 2,893 | 898 |

## Antarctic Treaty

**Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his

letter of 26 April to the hon. Member for Linlithgow, what action was taken by Her Majesty's Government's delegation to the Antarctic treaty consultative meeting in Seoul about the condition of the Amundson-Scott base at the south pole. [22661]

**Mr. David Davis:** The Antarctic treaty consultative meeting in Seoul does not finish until Friday 19 May. I will write to the hon. Gentleman giving a substantive reply after that date.

### Former Soviet Union (Visas)

**Dr. Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what basis certain citizens of the countries of the former Soviet Union are not charged for visas to travel to the United Kingdom; when this policy was started; and what plans there are to extend it to other countries. [22649]

**Mr. Baldry:** The exchange of notes between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics concerning the mutual abolition of consular fees on visas, Moscow, 13 April 1964, provides for entry clearance application fees to be waived for nationals of the former Soviet Union.

There are no plans to introduce similar arrangements for nationals of other countries.

### Belgium (Passport Control)

**Mr. Marlow:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the stamping of United Kingdom passports at the Belgian frontier; and if it is his intention that Belgian passports should be stamped at the United Kingdom frontier. [22773]

**Mr. David Davis:** We are aware of a number of cases recently where the passports of UK nationals have been date-stamped by Belgian immigration officials at the Belgian frontier. We have no reason to believe that this practice amounts to immigration control on UK nationals, which would be illegal. Nevertheless, we have brought it to the attention of the Belgian authorities. The UK has no intention of date-stamping the passports of Belgian or any other EU nationals.

## EDUCATION

### Accounting Officers

**Mr. Meacher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many times in the last 10 years, and on which dates, her departmental accounting officer has issued a minute in that role; and what was the issue in each case. [22556]

**Mr. Robin Squire:** Where a Minister overrules an accounting officer's advice on an issue of propriety or regularity or one of value for money the accounting officer should request a written instruction from the Minister to take the action in question.

In a reply to the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) of 3 March 1994 *Official Report*, column *808*, it was reported that the Secretary of State had not since 1979 issued any formal instructions to override the advice of his accounting officer on a matter of propriety or regularity or one relating to economy, efficiency and effectiveness. No direction has been issued since the date of that reply.

All such instructions are reported to the Comptroller and Auditor General who, after making whatever investigations he considers appropriate, will report his findings to the Public Accounts Committee.

### Special Needs

**Mr. David Porter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will make a statement on progress of the special educational needs code of practice; to what extent teachers are reporting increased work load as a result; and what plans there are to revise it. [22634]

**Mr. Forth:** The code of practice on the identification and assessment of special educational needs came into effect in September 1994. It has been widely welcomed as reflecting and supporting good practice in schools. Some schools have expressed concern at the increased work load as they change their procedures in the light of the guidance in the code. The Department is monitoring the implementation of the code and will in due course evaluate its effectiveness. There are no plans to revise the code at this stage.

### Nursery Places

**Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the current average cost of providing a full-time nursery place in each local education authority in England and Wales. [22822]

**Mr. Forth:** This information is not held centrally for local education authorities in England. Local education authorities in Wales are the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Wales.

### Grant-maintained Schools

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will list the grant-maintained schools which have sought a change in their planned admission level or their standard number; and in each case *(a)* if the application has been successful, *(b)* how many objections were submitted and *(c)* if an objection was submitted by the local education authority. [23127]

**Mr. Forth:** Schools set published admission levels above their approved admission numbers in any particular year without applying to my right hon. Friend for approval.

Details of applications from grant-maintained schools to vary their approved admission numbers are shown in the table. Applications from grant-maintained schools in stage 2 and 3 areas are the responsibility of the Funding Agency for Schools. I have asked its chairman to write to the hon. Member.

| *School* | *Successful (a)* | *Number of objections (b)* | *LEA objection (c)* |
|---|---|---|---|
| All Saints CE Primary, Sutton | No | Nil | No |
| Beaconsfield High, Buckinghamshire | Yes | Nil | No |
| Beechen Cliff, Avon | Yes | Two | No |

| School | Successful (a) | Number of objections (b) | LEA objection (c) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Deacon's School, Cambridgshire | Yes | Nil | No |
| Homewood School, Kent | Yes | None | No |
| Queensmead School, Harrow | Yes | None | No |
| St. Bartholomews School, Berkshire | No | None | No |
| Tiffin Boys' School, Kingston | Yes | [1]One | Yes |

[1] LEA objection.

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what were the total numbers of schools new to the grant-maintained sector since the previous year for each financial year from 1990–91 to 1995–96 *(a)* from which bids for capital grants for named projects were received and *(b)* to which allocations were approved.

**Mr. Forth:** These matters are now the responsibility of the Funding Agency for Schools. I have asked its chairman to write to the hon. Member with this information.

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will list the grant-maintained schools which have sought approval for changes in their admissions policy to introduce the selection of pupils by reference to their aptitude or ability which do not constitute a significant change of character; and in each case *(a)* if their application has been successful, *(b)* how many objections were submitted and *(c)* if an objection was submitted by the local education authority. [23126]

**Mr. Forth:** This information is not readily available. I will write to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education which grant-maintained schools have applied for a change of character; and what was her decision in each case. [23128]

**Mr. Forth:** The information requested has been placed in the Library.

## Nursery Education

**Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will list the Acts of Parliament, and the statutory instruments in force arising therefrom, relating to *(a)* standards for premises for nursery education, *(b)* qualifications of nursery school teachers, *(c)* training and qualifications of nursery assistants and *(d)* ratios of (i) qualified teachers and (ii) assistants to pupils in nursery education. [23101]

**Mr. Forth:** The standards for premises at maintained schools attended by nursery pupils are set out in the Education (School Premises) Regulations 1981 made under the Education Act 1944.

The qualifications required of teachers employed at maintained nursery schools are governed by the Education (Teachers) Regulations 1993 made under the Education Reform Act 1988.

There are no statutory requirements for staff-pupil ratios and nursery assistant qualifications in maintained nursery schools and classes. Guidance on such matters is given in the Children Act 1989 guidance.

## Telephones

**Mr. Donohoe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps her Department has taken to prevent the cloning of telephones being utilised by her Department; and if her Department has discussed this matter with any official agencies. [23458]

**Mr. Forth:** The Department has a code of good practice for all users of analogue mobile phones, which includes advice received from British Telecom about security and password protection. The Department has started to purchase the latest digital technology mobile phones, which British Telecom states cannot be cloned.

**Mr. Donohoe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what costs her Department has incurred during the last 12 months as a result of cloning of mobile telephones being utilised by her Department, with particular reference to the making of unauthorised calls. [23494]

**Mr. Forth:** No costs have been incurred during the last 12 months as a result of cloning of mobile telephones.

**Mr. Donhoe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what use her Department makes of hand-held and car-based mobile telephones; what were the costs for each financial year of these services since mobile telephones were first introduced to her Department; and how many mobile telephones are currently in use. [23437]

**Mr. Forth:** Mobile telephones have been in use in the Department since 1990. Currently, 115 mobiles are held at annual rental of £31,050 plus calls charges. No central record of call charges is available. Last year, 100 mobiles were held at an annual rental of £27,000 plus. Minimal use is made of car-based mobile telephones.

**Mr. Donohoe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many mobile telephones being utilised by her Department have been cloned during the last 12 months. [23502]

**Mr. Forth:** No mobile telephones have been cloned during the last 12 months.

**Mr. Donohoe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations her Department has made to the Department of Trade and Industry concerning the need for legislation to prevent the cloning of mobile phones. [23397]

**Mr. Forth:** Cloning of mobile phones has not been a problem for the Department. No representations have been made to the Department of Trade and Industry.

# WALES

## Psychiatry Beds

**Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will provide a table showing the number of elderly mental illness beds in each of the district general hospital areas of Wales. [21587]

**Mr. Richards:** The following table lists those NHS trusts and directly managed units which had, at 31 March 1994, a district general hospital and beds allocated to old-age psychiatry.

| NHS Trust/Management Unit | Beds allocated to old age psychiatry at 31 March 1994 |
|---|---|
| Bridgend and District NHS Trust | 158 |
| Ceredigion and Mid Wales NHS Trust | 5 |
| Llandough Hospital NHS Trust | 37 |
| Merthyr Cynon Health Unit | 61 |
| University Hospital of Wales/Cardiff Royal Infirmary Group of Hospitals | 58 |

## Administration Costs

**Mr. Beggs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what were the numbers of staff and the administrative costs of each education authority in Wales and the number of school pupils for which each education authority was responsible in the year ended 31 March. [21790]

**Mr. Richards:** The latest available information on administrative costs and pupil numbers for each local education authority are given in the table. Administration costs refer to all education services administered by local authorities, including continuing education and the youth service. Pupil numbers refer only to pupils of maintained primary, secondary and special schools. Information on administrative staff numbers, for individual local authorities, is not held centrally.

*Local Education Authority gross expenditure on Administration and Inspection 1993–94*[1]

| | Staff costs[2] £000 | Total[3] £000 | Pupil numbers[4] |
|---|---|---|---|
| Clwyd | 2,189 | 8,413 | 62,107 |
| Dyfed | 3,879 | 7,945 | 56,525 |
| Gwent | 2,105 | 7,252 | 72,947 |
| Gwynedd | 1,849 | 4,781 | 35,059 |
| Mid Glamorgan | 4,930 | 11,321 | 97,187 |
| Powys | 990 | 2,072 | 18,725 |
| South Glamorgan | 2,376 | 3,722 | 65,468 |
| West Glamorgan | 2,022 | 4,918 | 58,482 |
| Total Wales | 20,340 | 50,424 | 466,500 |

[1] Provisional outturn.

[2] Includes teaching, education support, premises related, administrative, clerical and other staff within the education management and support services sector.

[3] Includes expenditure on service strategy and regulation, management and administration and the inspection and advisory services within the education management and support services sector.

[4] Full-time equivalents at January 1994. Excludes grant-maintained schools.

## Brucellosis

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many cases of brucellosis have occurred in each year since 1985. [21820]

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** The only years since 1985 in which there were confirmed brucellosis cattle herd breakdowns are as follows: 1985 four; 1986 eight; 1987 one; and 1993 one.

## Chernobyl

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total compensation paid to farmers for loss of earnings and clean-up of radioactive contamination on Welsh farms arising from the fallout from the Chernobyl nuclear accident in 1986. [22026]

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** The sheep compensation scheme was introduced in July 1986 to compensate farmers whose enterprises had been disrupted as a result of movement and slaughter restrictions and other effects of the Chernobyl accident. The total paid out under the scheme in Wales up to the end of March 1995 is £7,524,272. Most of this sum has been compensation for costs associated with monitoring and marking animals before movement under consent.

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many farms in Wales are still affected by restriction notices imposed due to radioactive contamination following the Chernobyl nuclear accident in 1986; and what land area these farms constitute as a percentage of available farmland in Wales. [22017]

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** A review of the number of holdings now affected by post-Chernobyl restrictions, and of the extent to which those holdings are affected, was recently undertaken to assess the effects of recent derestrictions and the numerous changes in land ownership and tenure which have occurred during the past nine years.

The outcome of the review shows that 196 holdings now remain wholly affected by restrictions. A further 247 holdings are partially affected by virtue of their having access to some land inside the restricted area; this includes those holdings which have grazing rights within the area whether they are taken up or not, and those holdings which have some land, whether leased, owned or rented, within the restricted area. These figures will be subjected to future variation because of the frequent and often significant changes which will inevitably continue to occur in land ownership, tenure and occupation, including factors such as amalgamations and fragmentation of holdings.

Restrictions now cover about 160,000 acres which represents about 4 per cent. of agricultural land in Wales.

## Farmers and Farm Workers

**Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total number of *(a)* farmers and *(b)* farm workers for each year since 1988, giving the figures as a percentage of the Welsh population. [21859]

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** Farmers and farm workers in Wales, 1988 to 1994:

| | Farmers[1] | | Farm workers[2] | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Total population[3] | As a percentage of total | Total population[3] | As a percentage of total |
| 1988 | 34,854 | 1.22 | 30,992 | 1.09 |
| 1989 | 35,309 | 1.23 | 30,273 | 1.06 |
| 1990 | 35,046 | 1.22 | 29,992 | 1.04 |
| 1991 | 34,248 | 1.18 | 30,341 | 1.05 |
| 1992 | 35,115 | 1.21 | 29,819 | 1.03 |

| | Farmers[1] | | Farm workers[2] | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Total population[3] | As a percentage of total | Total population[3] | As a percentage of total |
| 1993 | 35,977 | 1.24 | 29,149 | 1.00 |
| 1994 | 35,278 | 1.21 | 28,484 | 0.98 |

*Source:*
June Agricultural Census, OPCS and Government Actuary's Department.
*Notes:*
[1] Whole-time and part-time farmers, partners and directors working on the farm holding at the time of the Agricultural Census.
[2] All other persons working on the farm holding, including spouses of farmers, of partners and of directors, but excluding trainees on Government scheme.
[3] From 1988 to 1993, the Registrar General's mid-year estimate of usually resident population. The 1994 figure is the Government Actuary's Department's 1992–based projection of usually resident population.

### NHS Trusts

**Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what recent discussions he has had with health trusts concerning the matter of finance; and if he will make a statement. [22114]

**Mr. Richards:** My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I meet the chairmen of NHS trusts periodically to discuss a range of issues, including finance.

### Nursery Education

**Mr Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his policy concerning nursery education and if he will make a statement. [22116]

**Mr. Richards:** My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made clear last October that the Government are committed to making available a nursery place for every four-year-old whose parents want to take it up. We are considering carefully how to deliver that commitment in Wales and will consult widely on proposals.

### Livestock Diseases

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many cases of foot and mouth disease occurred in each year since 1978; [22178]

(2) how many cases of epizootic lymphangitis occurred in each year since 1985; [22182]

(3) how many cases of pleuro-pneumonia occurred in each year since 1985. [22168]

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** None.

### Labour Statistics

**Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women aged 40 and over who are out of work. [22810]

**Mr. Redwood:** In January 1995, the numbers of males and females aged 40 and over, who were in the unemployment claimant count in Wales were 27,076 and 7,925 respectively.

### Class Sizes

**Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the total extra money required to be allocated to local education authorities in Wales to ensure class sizes throughout of 30. [22807]

**Mr. Richards:** My right hon. Friend has made no such assessment. Class sizes are a matter for individual schools to determine.

### Birds of Prey

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the number and species of birds of prey poisoned in each year since 1987. [22364]

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** Information held by the Department on the number and species of birds of prey poisoned in Wales since 1987 is as follows:

| | Red Kite | Buzzard | Peregrin Falcon |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1987 | — | 1 | 1 |
| 1988 | — | 1 | — |
| 1989 | 7 | 5 | 1 |
| 1990 | — | 1 | — |
| 1991 | 1 | 1 | — |
| 1992 | 6 | 1 | — |
| 1993 | 3 | 4 | — |
| 1994 | 2 | 1 | 2 |

### Accounting Officers

**Mr. Meacher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many times in the last 10 years, and on which dates, his departmental accounting officer has issued a minute in that role; and what was the issue in each case. [22561]

**Mr. Redwood:** Where a Minister overrules an accounting officer's advice on an issue of propriety or regularity of expenditure or one of value for money, the accounting officer should request a written instruction from the Minister to take the action in question.

Details of the two cases where such an instruction was given to my Department's accounting officer were set out in my reply of 23 March 1994 to the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) *Official Report,* column *317.* There have been no subsequent cases.

All such instructions are now reported to the Comptroller and Auditor General, who after making whatever investigations he considers appropriate will report his findings to the Public Accounts Committee.

### S4C

**Dr. Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, what information he has received from *(a)* departmental surveys and *(b)* S4C on the proportion of Welsh speakers that watches Welsh language television; and if he will make a statement. [22828]

**Mr. Richards:** The Welsh social survey, which was conducted in 1992, showed that 81.5 per cent. of Welsh speakers watched S4C regularly or sometimes. S4C's annual report for 1993 indicated that independent audience measurement carried out by the Broadcasters Audience Research Board showed that, on average, 84 per cent. of Welsh speakers watched S4C at some point in any given week.

### Medium Secure Units

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, if he will list by regional health authority and by district health authority the current number of beds in medium secure units run by health authorities; what were the figures for each of the last four years; and if he will make a statement. [23513]

**Mr. Richards:** There are 19 medium secure beds available in the Caswell clinic, Glanrhyd hospital, Bridgend, which is the only such NHS facility operational within Wales. An extension to the facility is to be officially opened in June of this year and will subsequently increase the provision to 33 beds.

In north Wales, planning approval to develop a purpose-built, 25-bed medium secure unit at Llanfairfechan was obtained on 9 November 1994. The facility is expected to open in the first half of 1997.

## NATIONAL HERITAGE

### Private Finance

**Mr. Simpson:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what percentage of his Department's budget is allocated to initiatives which have been undertaken to secure private finance for his Department's projects. [22795]

**Mr. Dorrell:** My Departments operates mainly through its many sponsored bodies and agencies and undertakes little capital expenditure on its own account. Its effort is therefore largely devoted to encouraging those whom it sponsors to exploit to the full in their own capital programmes the opportunities of the private finance initiative. I estimate that the cost of the promotional effort across my Department is about £65,000.

### Accounting Officers

**Mr. Meacher:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many times, and on which date, his departmental accounting officer has issued a minute in that role; and what was the issue in each case. [22554]

**Mr. Dorrell:** There have been no occasions on which such action has been taken since the establishment of my Department in April 1992.

### Works of Art

**Mr. Faulds:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage for what reasons a sculpture by Antonio Canova and a painting by Albrecht Altdorfer, were omitted from the list given in his written answer to the hon. Member for Warley, East on 8 March, *Official Report*, columns *177-78*, on the progress of cases relating to the export of works of art; and if he will make a statement on the status of these items. [23168]

**Mr. Dorrell:** The answer given on 8 March included only those items where the decision to withhold the issue of an export licence had been taken during the half year ended 31 December 1994.

The sculpture "The Three Graces" by Antonio Canova was referred to in a reply to the hon. Member on 18 January 1994, *Official Report*, columns *497-98*. The subsequent decision, taken in the half year ended 30 June 1994, was detailed in Parliamentary Command paper 2710, the fortieth report of the Reviewing Committee. The sculpture has been acquired jointly by the Victoria and Albert museum and the National Galleries of Scotland.

A decision on the painting "The Adoration of the Magi" by Albrecht Altdorfer was taken during January 1995. An export licence has been issued for this painting.

A Departmental press release of 30 March 1995 included these two cases as it is the practice to publicise details of all cases where decisions on export licence applications have been deferred.

### S4C

**Dr. Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what criteria he uses in considering whether S4C is proving a satisfactory service to the people of Wales and whether S4C is being managed effectively and in a satisfactory manner. [22827]

**Mr. Dorrell:** The Welsh Fourth Channel Authority has the duty under the Broadcasting Act 1990 to ensure that S4C provides a satisfactory service. My Department needs to be satisfied that S4C has suitable arrangements in place to ensure that its financial systems are sufficient to safeguard public funds and that voted expenditure is being used for the purposes set out in the Act.

**Dr. Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will place in the Library copies of the S4C's corporate strategy and its most recent operational plan. [22823]

**Mr. Dorrell:** I am arranging for copies of S4C's 1995 business plan to be placed in the Library of the House.

**Dr. Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list all discussions or correspondence with S4C, at ministerial or official level, since 31 March 1994, concerning staffing levels, remuneration and staff grading. [22824]

**Mr. Dorrell:** Staffing levels, remuneration and staff grading are matters for S4C which reports to Parliament each year through its annual report and accounts. I have had no discussions or correspondence on these topics.

**Dr. Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what discussions he has had with S4C on the implications for S4C of the recent Welsh Office social survey on television viewing habits; and if he will make a statement. [22826]

**Mr. Dorrell:** I have had no such discussions with S4C. It is for S4C, if it wishes, to draw any lessons for the Welsh Office social survey to inform their programming decisions.

**Dr. Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will inquire into the relationship between S4C and Teledwyr Annibynnol Cymru to assess whether the arrangements for funding TAC and its training and sponsorship affiliates are an appropriate use of S4C's programme funds. [22817]

**Mr. Dorrell:** The financial and other relationships between S4C and Teledwyr Annibynnol Cymru form part of the terms of reference of the study my Department has commissioned from Mr. John Beastall.

**Dr. Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage on how many occasions in the last year he has formally met the chairman of S4C to discuss the affairs of the authority. [22637]

**Mr. Dorrell:** I have formally met the chairman of S4C once in the last year.

**Dr. Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list all meetings between his Department and officials of S4C since January 1994. [22635]

**Mr. Dorrell:** Since January 1994, my Department has held formal meetings with S4C on three occasions: 16 March 1994, 1 July 1994 and 8 March 1995. My officials responsible for broadcasting matters are, of course, in regular contact with S4C.

**Dr. Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list by grade those of his officials whose duties are related solely to S4C. [22638]

**Mr. Dorrell:** I have no officials whose duties are related solely to S4C.

**Dr. Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list by grade the staff in his Department whose duties involve S4C who are able to conduct their responsibilities through the medium of Welsh. [22636]

**Mr. Dorrell:** I have no staff whose duties involve S4C who are able to conduct their responsibilities through the medium of Welsh.

**Dr. Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what consultation *(a)* his Department and *(b)* the Welsh Language Board had with the S4C Authority before S4C's service provision was split; and what was the statutory basis of the decision. [22650]

**Mr. Dorrell:** The Welsh Fourth Channel Authority was established under the Broadcasting Act 1980, and now operates as S4C under the Broadcasting Act 1990. The Government undertook wide consultation prior to the introduction of legislation on both occasions. One of the S4C's statutory duties is to ensure that a substantial proportion of the programmes that it broadcasts are in Welsh and the programmes broadcast between 6.30pm and 10pm each day consist mainly of programmes in Welsh. How it carries out this remit is an editorial matter for S4C.

**Dr. Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what were the staffing levels of S4C at 31 March in each year since 1991 and on 31 December 1994. [22825]

**Mr. Dorrell:** S4C publishes figures for the average number of employees in each calender year in its annual report and accounts, copies of which are laid before Parliament and are in the Library of the House. Figures for the last four years are as follows

1991: 116
1992: 108
1993: 199
1994: 127

The 1994 annual report and accounts have not yet been published.

### Business Sponsorship Incentive Scheme

**Dr. Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what were the costs of the investigations instigated by his Department into the alleged misuse of the BS1S for matching private and public funds for the support of the arts. [23014]

**Mr. Dorrell:** The investigation was carried out by Mr. John Beastall, who is a Treasury civil servant. My Department is responsible for travel costs arising from his study. The cost of these is expected to amount to £320.

**Dr. Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement on investigations *(a)* instigated and *(b)* evaluated by his Department into the alleged misuse of the BSIS for matching private and public funds for the support of the arts. [23015]

**Mr. Dorrell:** My Department has received the report which I announced on 27 February had been commissioned from Mr. John Beastall, *Official Report*, column *680*. Once the findings have been evaluated, I shall make his report available to the House.

Mr. Beastall was asked in his review to take account of reports received by my Department from the Association for Business Sponsorship of the Arts and from the Welsh Fourth Channel Authority, S4C. He has also drawn on an examination of the relevant records and a series of interviews with staff of S4C and the companies and organisations involved in the applications, conducted, at S4C's request, by Grant Thornton, S4C's auditors.

### Churchill Papers

**Mr. Fisher:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the names of foreign organisations or individuals who have been *(a)* negotiating with the trustees or *(b)* bidding for the Churchill Trust Papers over the past five years. [22945]

**Mr. Dorrell:** This is a matter for the Churchill family trustees.

**Mr. Fisher:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) if he will publish the legal advice he has received on the ownership of copyright of the Churchill papers; [22120]

(2) when his Department began inquiries into the ownership of copyright of the Churchill papers; and at what cost in legal advice and action; [22121]

(3) what advice he has taken on the ownership of copyright of the Churchill papers. [22122]

**Mr. Dorrell** *[holding answer 2 May 1995]:* The Government have received advice that copyright in state papers belongs to the Crown. It has also been advised that it does not own the copyright in the non-state papers in the Churchill archive.

The Government took advice on these subjects in July 1991 and again in May 1994. The advice cost £3,100 exclusive of VAT.

### Cinema Ownership

**Mr. Cran:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make it his policy to promote diversity in the ownership of cinemas in the United Kingdom. [21990]

**Mr. Dorrell:** It is not the government's policy to interfere in the ownership of private companies, except in circumstances defined in legislation.

### Public Bodies

**Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is the target, expressed in percentage terms, for female membership of the boards of his Department's sponsored bodies. [20994]

**Mr. Dorrell:** My Department hopes to achieve its goal of 35 per cent. representation of women on its public bodies by September 1996.

### European Football Championship

**Mr. Chris Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage, pursuant to his answer of 28 April, *Official Report*, column *738*, on the European football championship, by whom supporting programmes of cultural events are being drawn up. [22532]

**Mr. Dorrell:** Supporting events are being planned by, among others, host local authorities and regional arts boards—in liaison with the Football Association, regional tourist boards and the British Tourist Authority, and the English tourist board.

### Television Licence Reminder Forms

**Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what discussions he has had with the BBC licence fee unit regarding the possible changes in the television licence reminder forms; and if he will make a statement. [22924]

**Mr. Dorrell:** Under the Broadcasting Act 1990, responsibility for the administration and enforcement of the television licensing system passed to the BBC with effect from 1 April 1991. It is therefore for the BBC to determine the content and presentation of the television licence reminder forms it uses.

### National Lottery

**Mr. David Porter:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement on the circumstances in which a small regional charity designed to assist children to take up dancing courses past the age of 16, may be eligible for assistance from the national lottery; and if he will make a statement about dance. [22633]

**Mr. Dorrell:** Any dance organisation which meets the criteria set out in the guidance for applicants for national lottery proceeds issued by the four national Arts Councils can apply to one of those bodies for financial assistance.

## HOME DEPARTMENT

### Court Escort Service

**Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list escapes from the court escort service in *(a)* London and *(b)* England and Wales in (i) 1979, (ii) 1985, (iii) 1990 and (iv) the last year for which figures are available. [21895]

**Mr. Michael Forsyth** *[holding answer 3 May 1995]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

*Letter from Derek Lewis to Mrs. Barbara Roche, dated 9 May 1995:*

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking for a list of escapes from the Court Escort Service in *(a)* London and *(b)* England and Wales in (i) 1979, (ii) 1985, (iii) 1990 and (iv) the last year for which figures are available.

The Court Escort Service started escorting prisoners in England and Wales (Area 7—East Midlands and Humberside) from 5 April 1993 and in London (Metropolitan) from 27 June 1994. The Metropolitan Court Escort Service is being phased in and is not yet fully implemented.

The information for the last year available (5 April 1994—31 March 1995) is given below:

| *Period* | *Escort Service Area* | *Number of Escapes* |
|---|---|---|
| 5 April 1994–31 March 1995 | Area 7 | 13 |
| 27 June 1994–31 March 1995 | Metropolitan | 2 |

Figures exclude prisoners recaptured within 15 minutes provided no further offences has been committed

Information about escapes from police forces in earlier years is not recorded centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

### Training

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the content of training provided to officials in the admission and asylum procedure with respect to *(a)* knowledge of international legal instruments, *(b)* asylum law, *(c)* humanitarian law, with particular reference to the Geneva convention and protocols, *(d)* language skills, *(e)* interview techniques, *(f)* inter-cultural training and *(g)* other matters. [22743]

**Mr. Nicholas Baker** *[holding answer 5 May 1995]:* The power to grant or refuse passengers leave to enter the United Kingdom is exercised by immigration officers. However, the determination of asylum claims is entirely a matter for officers in the asylum division of the Home Office who receive training based on the 1951 United Nations convention relating to the status of refugees and its 1967 protocol. Training regularly addresses most of the issues listed. Language skills are not required as interpreters are used when necessary.

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what types of personnel are recruited to train officials in admission and asylum procedure; how they are recruited; and if he will make a statement on the training methods and materials used. [22744]

**Mr. Nicholas Baker** *[holding answer 5 May 1995]:* Trainers are recruited internally by competitive selection. Essential qualities include well developed inter-personal and communication skills coupled with detailed knowledge and experience of the appropriate subject matter. The methodology and materials used vary according to circumstances, and include role play, classroom presentations and video.

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department to what extent training of officials in the admission and asylum procedures is carried out by a training institution; and how training is organised. [22745]

**Mr. Nicholas Baker** *[holding answer 5 May 1995]:* Training is delivered by immigration and nationality department staff trainers experienced in asylum related work. There is a continuing programme of courses and specialist seminars, with contributions from outside organisations such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the objectives set for the training of border officials in dealing with asylum-seekers and refugees as set out in *(a)* legislative tests, *(b)* regulations, *(c)* guidelines and *(d)* other documents. [22746]

**Mr. Nicholas Baker** *[holding answer 5 May 1995]:* The objectives of immigration officer training in asylum work are to:

(a) familiarise officers with the general principles of the 1951 United Nations convention relating to the status of refugees and its 1967 Protocol.

(b) instruct them in the relevant immigration rules and legislation.

(c) inform them of the procedures to adopt when interviewing applicants, referring applications to the asylum division and implementing asylum decisions.

(d) ensure that consistently high standards of professionalism and courtesy are maintained when dealing with asylum applicants, as with any other category of passenger.

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list the category of officials who may come into contact with asylum seekers arriving in the United Kingdom; [22747]

(2) if he will list the categories of officials who have been assigned a specific role in the admission and asylum procedure. [22749]

**Mr. Nicholas Baker** *[holding answers 5 May 1995]:* Passengers arriving in the United Kingdom are examined by an immigration officer in accordance with the Immigration Act 1971. Passengers who apply for asylum will be interviewed initially by an immigration officer. All such cases will then be referred to the asylum division of the Home Office for determination of the asylum claim.

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what financial resources were devoted to the training of officials in admission and asylum procedures in the current and previous financial years; and what is the percentage change. [22752]

**Mr. Nicholas Baker** *[holding answer 5 May 1995]:* The information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. In any event, asylum training is an integral part of the immigration and nationality department training programme and to separate the costs from the overall training expenditure would be misleading.

## Recruitment

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how officials who have been assigned a specific role in the admission and asylum procedure are recruited; and what is the minimum level of education required. [22748]

**Mr. Nicholas Baker** *[holding answer 5 May 1995]:* For external recruitment of executive and immigration officers, advertisements are placed in the national press, and selection is by fair and open competition on merit. Minimum educational qualifications are five GCSE/GCE passes at grade C and above, including English Language, of which two must be at A-level.

## Commission for Racial Equality

**Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the names, qualifications and the relevant background of members of the Commission for Racial Equality, with their dates of appointment and tenure. [22575]

**Mr. Nicholas Baker:** The posts of commissioner at the Commission for Racial Equality are the personal appointment of the Home Secretary. They are initially appointed for a two-year period with the possibility of further extensions up to a total of five years. The current commissioners are:

| *Name* | *Appointed* | *Until* |
|---|---|---|
| Mr. Herman Ouseley | 19.04.93 | 18.04.98 |
| Mr. Aubrey Rose | 01.11.90 | 31.10.95 |
| Dr. Michael Chan | 01.11.90 | 31.10.95 |
| Mr. Ranjit Sondhi | 15.11.90 | 14.11.95 |
| Dr. Raj Chandran | 01.01.93 | 31.12.96 |
| Mr. Michael Hastings | 01.05.93 | 30.04.97 |
| Mr. Bob Purkiss | 01.05.93 | 30.04.97 |
| Dr. Dwain Neil | 01.05.93 | 30.04.97 |
| Mrs. Marie Cunningham | 01.05.03 | 30.04.97 |
| Dr. Zaka Khan | 01.05.93 | 30.04.97 |
| Mrs. Zahida Manzoor | 22.11.93 | 31.03.97 |
| Mr. Moussa Jogee | 01.09.94 | 31.08.95 |
| Mr. Hugh Harris | 01.01.95 | 31.12.96 |
| Mrs. Jaslien Singh | 01.01.95 | 31.12.96 |

Detail of commissioners' backgrounds are set out in the Commission for Racial Equality's annual reports, the most recent of which will be published on 6 June; a copy will be placed in the Library.

## Entry Clearance

**Dr. Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many applications for visit entry clearance were *(a)* made, *(b)* granted and *(c)* refused at the British post in (i) New Delhi, (ii) Bombay, (iii) Dhaka, (iv) Islamabad, (v) Colombo, (vi) Calcutta, (vii) Madras and (viii) Karachi in (1) January to June 1993, (2) July to December 1993, (3) January to June 1994 and (4) July to December or the latest convenient date in 1994. [22641]

**Mr. Nicholas Baker:** The information is given in the table.

*Applications for entry clearance made by visitors, students and others for temporary purposes received, granted and refused, by post, 1993–94*

| *Post where application was made* | *1993* | | | *1994* | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *January–June* | *July–December* | *Year* | *January–June* | *July–December* | *Year* |
| *New Delhi* | | | | | | |
| Applications received | 19,360 | 16,190 | 35,540 | 23,140 | 18,500 | 41,640 |
| Granted (total)[2] | 16,860 | 13,630 | 30,500 | 19,480 | 15,190 | 34,670 |
| Initially refused | 1,180 | 2,050 | 3,230 | 3,440 | 3,300 | 6,740 |
| *Bombay* | | | | | | |
| Applications received | 20,500 | 15,420 | 35,930 | 24,140 | 17,210 | 41,360 |
| Granted (total)[2] | 18,470 | 13,890 | 32,360 | 22,180 | 15,970 | 38,150 |
| Initially refused | 1,910 | 1,350 | 3,250 | 1,760 | 1,020 | 2,780 |

*Applications for entry clearance made by visitors, students and others for temporary purposes received, granted and refused, by post, 1993–94*

| Post where application was made | 1993 January–June | 1993 July–December | 1993 Year | 1994 January–June | 1994 July–December | 1994 Year |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Calcutta* | | | | | | |
| Applications received | 3,610 | 3,090 | 6,700 | 4,210 | 3,230 | 7,430 |
| Granted (total)[2] | 3,430 | 2,930 | 6,360 | 4,090 | 3,110 | 7,200 |
| Initially refused | 150 | 90 | 240 | 50 | 80 | 130 |
| *Madras* | | | | | | |
| Applications received | 5,510 | 4,600 | 10,110 | 6,750 | 5,880 | 12,630 |
| Granted (total)[2] | 5,390 | 4,460 | 9,860 | 6,660 | 5,790 | 12,450 |
| Initially refused | 90 | 120 | 210 | 80 | 70 | 150 |
| *Islamabad* | | | | | | |
| Applications received | 16,800 | 17,400 | 34,210 | 15,270 | 20,100 | 35,360 |
| Granted (total)[2] | 12,370 | 12,890 | 25,260 | 11,480 | 13,630 | 25,110 |
| Initially refused | 3,030 | 3,550 | 6,580 | 2,830 | 4,330 | 7,170 |
| *Karachi* | | | | | | |
| Applications received | 12,460 | 11,490 | 23,940 | 14,290 | 14,170 | 28,460 |
| Granted (total)[2] | 10,640 | 9,680 | 20,330 | 11,770 | 11,380 | 23,150 |
| Initially refused | 980 | 1,130 | 2,100 | 1,050 | 1,350 | 2,400 |
| *Dhaka* | | | | | | |
| Applications received | 6,890 | 7,700 | 14,590 | 7,220 | 8,560 | 15,780 |
| Granted (total)[2] | 5,470 | 5,890 | 11,360 | 5,160 | 6,180 | 11,350 |
| Initially refused | 1,410 | 1,730 | 3,140 | 1,890 | 2,250 | 4,140 |
| *Colombo* | | | | | | |
| Applications received | 5,050 | 4,860 | 9,910 | 5,160 | 5,840 | 11,000 |
| Granted (total)[2] | n/a | n/a | 7,940 | n/a | n/a | 7,610 |
| Initially refused | 470 | 410 | 870 | 300 | 520 | 820 |

[1] Includes applications subsequently withdrawn.
[2] Granted initially or on appeal.
[3] Only partial information is available for Colombo.
n/a Not available.

## Police Cells

**Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoner nights were spent in police cells in *(a)* 1979, *(b)* 1985, *(c)* 1990 and *(d)* the last year for which figures are available; and on what date he expects to eliminate the use of police cells. [21268]

**Mr. Michael Forsyth** *[holding answer 1 May 1995]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

*Letter from Derek Lewis to Mrs. Barbara Roche, dated 9 May 1995:*

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about how many prisoner nights were spent in police cells in *(a)* 1979, *(b)* 1985, *(c)* 1990 and *(d)* the last year for which figures are available; and the date on which it is expected that the use of police cells will be eliminated.

Figures for the number of prisoners held in police cells have been collected centrally since 1980. The information available on how many prisoner nights were spent in police cells for 1980, 1985, 1990 and 1994 is given in the following table:

| Year | Number of prisoner nights spent in police cells |
|---|---|
| 1980 | 235,425 |
| 1985 | 16,425 |
| 1990 | 241,835 |
| 1994 | 54,277 |

The use of police cells is currently confined to the north west of England. The provision of 260 new places at Buckley Hall prison on 1 May and the return to use, following refurbishment, of a further 217 places at Manchester by 28 May, should end the use of police cells this summer.

## Ethnic Minority Prisoners

**Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what special health and medical arrangements the Prison Service has in relation to ethnic minority prisoners. [23090]

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

*Letter from Mr. Derek Lewis to Mr. Doug Hoyle, dated 9 May 1995:*

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about special health and medical arrangements in relation to ethnic minority prisoners.

The Prison Service is committed to eliminating racial discrimination in all aspects of its work. Medical officers are required under the race relations policy to ensure equality of access to all health care facilities for all inmates.

more than 50 per cent. of prison medical officers are from ethnic minorities.

If there are language differences which make communication difficult, prison medical officers are able to make use of the translation service which is available to governors. In establishments

with large numbers of foreign detainees, multi-lingual picture card materials are available which provide symptoms, signs, medical conditions and medical symptoms to facilitate understanding.

### European Economic Area Nationals

**Dr. Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department pursuant to his answer of 23 November, *Official Report*, column *158*, if he will account for the differences in the numbers of EEA nationals required to leave given in that answer and in the answer of 22 June 1994 to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen), *Official Report*, column *173*. [23025]

**Mr. Nicholas Baker:** The written answer given to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen), on 22 June 1994 at columns *172-73* contained a mis-print. The figure of *"108"* in column *173* should have read *"280"*. The error was not noted in time for the *Official Report* to be corrected, but I wrote to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North on 24 November 1994 informing him of the printing error. A copy of my letter was placed in the Library. The figures contained in my reply of 23 November were correct for the period April to December 1993.

### Prevention of Terrorism (Exclusion Orders)

**Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many exclusion orders under the Prevention of Terrorism Acts have been in existence in each month of the past year; and when the most recent one was approved by him. [23040]

**Mr. Howard:** The information requested is as follows:

*Exclusion orders made under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989: the number in force at the end of each month*

| *Month* | *Orders made by Home Secretary* | *Orders made by Secretary of State for Northern Ireland* |
|---|---|---|
| *1994* | | |
| May | 72 | 9 |
| June | 72 | 9 |
| July | 70 | 10 |
| August | 67 | 10 |
| September | 64 | 10 |
| October | 62 | 10 |
| November | 61 | 10 |
| December | 58 | 10 |
| *1995* | | |
| January | 57 | 10 |
| February | 54 | 0 |
| March | 40 | 0 |
| April | 40 | 0 |

The most recent order was made on 16 January 1995 on the expiry of an order which was already in force.

### Private Finance Initiative

**Mr. Simpson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of his Department's budget is allocated to initiatives which have been undertaken to secure private finance for his Department's projects. [22716]

**Mr. Howard:** Work associated with the private finance initiative is undertaken by Home Office staff as part of their normal duties. Separate information on this aspect of their work is not available. Resources allocated specifically to overseeing and developing the initiative amount to 0.002 per cent. of my Department's budget.

### Liquor Licences, Durham

**Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list *(a)* the number of late licences issued by Durham magistrates over the last three years, *(b)* the organisations granted the licences, *(c)* the length of time of the extension, *(d)* the special occasion for which the licences were issued and *(e)* the number of applications which have been refused. [22581]

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** We understand from the clerk of the justices at Durham magistrates court that the numbers of special orders for exemption granted by the court in the last three years are:

1992: 543
1993: 218
1994: 284

The clerk also informs us that the other information requested, which is not available centrally, could be obtained only at disproportionate cost, but that most special orders of exemption granted by Durham magistrates court to extend evening licensing hours run until 11.30 pm.

### Rape

**Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many rape cases were heard in courts in England and Wales during each of the last three years. [22376]

**Mr. Maclean:** Information on the number of defendants prosecuted for rape offences is published annually in "Criminal statistics England and Wales Supplementary tables, Volume 1, Proceedings in magistrates' courts". Table S1.1(A) refers to it. The most recent edition is for 1993. The 1994 data will be available in the autumn.

### Deportation

**Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement as to who has the responsibility for *(a)* men and *(b)* women who have served their prison sentence and are detained by the immigration services in prison awaiting deportation orders. [22378]

**Mr. Nicholas Baker:** The Prison Service is responsible for the day-to-day care of such detainees and the immigration service is responsible for reviewing the continued need for detention, the handling of the caseworkassociated with the making of a deportation order and making arrangements for removal from the United Kingdom, but the overall responsibility rests with the Secretary of State for the Home Department.

### Hunger Strikes

**Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women who had been on hunger strike in prisons in England and Wales for more than 14 days on 17 April. [22205]

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison

Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

*Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Tom Cox, dated 9 May 1995:*

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the number of men and women who had been on hunger strike in prisons in England and Wales for more than 14 days on 17 April.

There was only one male prisoner who had been on hunger strike for over 14 days on that date.

### Action Against Crime

**Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much was spent producing his Department's recent Action Against Crime packs; and how many were produced. [22266]

**Mr. Howard:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms Primarolo) on 24 April, *Official Report*, column *385*.

### Smoking

**Mr. Peter Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what facilities are provided and arrangements made for the well-being and comfort of staff who *(a)* smoke and *(b)* do not wish to be affected by smoking at (i) the work-station and (ii) rest, recreation and refreshment facilities at 50 Queen Anne's gate, London. [21911]

**Mr. Howard:** At 50 Queen Anne's gate smoking is not allowed in lifts, toilets and conference rooms. There is a small smoking area in the staff restaurant. The extent to which smoking is allowed in offices is a matter for heads of divisions, taking into account the individual preferences of their staff.

### Equal Opportunities

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made within his Department on equal opportunities matters. [21527]

**Mr. Howard:** My Department is committed to ensuring that all staff are treated fairly and have an equal opportunity to contribute to the office's work. This stems not only from considerations of equity, but from the need to ensure that the Department makes the best use of the qualities that its staff possess.

To this end, the Department works towards implementing the three programmes for action produced by the Cabinet Office—Office of Public Service and Science—which cover issues of race, gender and disability and provide a framework for departmental policy on equal opportunities.

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress he hopes to achieve in his Department over the next three months to push forward the declaration signed in October 1994 at the Vienna conference in preparation for the fourth UN conference on women; and if he will agree to incorporate a section on equal opportunities in his Department's annual report. [21529]

**Mr. Howard:** The Government are committed to the principles set out in the regional platform for action agreed at the preparatory conference in Vienna for the fourth UN conference on women. We have taken these forward through a wide range of programmes and initiatives and will continue to do so.

Material on equal opportunities is incorporated in the Home Office annual report each year.

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the gender assessment being prepared by his Department. [21528]

**Mr. Howard:** The Department's policy, in line with guidance issued in 1992 by the ministerial group on women's issues, is that policy proposals should ensure that unlawful or unjustifiable sex or race discrimination does not occur and that similar principles apply to people with disabilities, older people or ex-offenders. This scrutiny is part of a continuous process, as part of policy advice to Ministers.

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which Minister in his Department has responsibility for equal opportunities issues. [21526]

**Mr. Howard:** I have overall responsibility for personnel matters in the Department, including equal opportunities for staff. Other Ministers deal with equal opportunities issues as they arise within the subject areas for which they are responsible.

### Fazakerley and Bridgend Prisons

**Mr. George Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what financial penalties he proposes to build into the contracts for Fazakerley and Bridgend prisons which could be invoked if, by a decision of Government, the contracts were terminated; [21221]

(2) if he will place copies of the tender documents and proposed contract documents from Fazakerley and Bridgend prisons in the Library; [21219]

(3) if he will list the types of circumstances in which the successful tendering for the operation of Fazakerley and Bridgend prisons under the terms of the proposed contracts can be held to be in breach of contract; [21223]

(4) what review periods and at what frequency he proposes to build into the proposed contracts for Bridgend and Fazakerley prisons; [21218]

(5) what duration he proposes to put on the contracts for Fazakerley and Bridgend prisons; [21222]

(6) what financial or other kinds of penalties he proposes to build into the contracts for operating Bridgend and Fazakerley prisons; penalties could be invoked. [21220]

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

*Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. George Howarth, dated 9 May 1995:*

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Questions about the contracts for the prisons to be built at Fazakerley and Bridgend.

Evaluation of the bids to design, construct, manage and finance the prisons at Fazakerley and Bridgend has not yet been completed and, therefore, it is not yet possible to set out the exact terms and

conditions relating to performance and termination that will be included in the final contract.

However, the Prison Service has proposed that the contracts should be for the provision of a custodial service for 25 years. Also, the Authority will retain the right to terminate the contracts both voluntarily and in the event of default by the contractor. A system of performance measurement will be included in the final contracts, providing the ability to penalise the contractor for sub-standard performance. The financial settlement due in respect of any of the above events is still a matter included in the above negotiations, but the invitation to tender described the amount to be paid on termination for default as whichever is the lesser sum of the value of the project to the contractor or the contractor's loan liabilities at the time.

I have arranged for a copy of the invitation to tender to be placed in the library, and shall arrange for a copy of the final unpriced version of the contracts to be placed in the library when the have been signed.

## SOCIAL SECURITY

### National Insurance Recording System

**Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security who will own the data following the letting of the contract for the national insurance recording system number 2; and if he will make a statement. [22577]

**Mr. Arbuthnot:** The Secretary of State for Social Security will remain the owner of all data held within the national insurance recording system—NIRS2. Custodianship and management of the data are delegated to the Contributions Agency, which directs the service provider in all matters connected to content and use of NIRS2 data.

### Income Support

**Mr. Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the savings to the Exchequer from the lowest rate of income support benefit payable to those aged between 18 and 25 years. [22407]

**Mr. Roger Evans:** The current annual cost of raising the income support rate for 18 to 24-year-olds to that payable for single people aged 25 and above would be about £240 million.

*Notes:*

1. The figure is based on the 1990, 1991, 1992 family expenditure surveys, uprated to 1995–96 prices and benefit levels.

2. The figure includes the additional cost of linked increases in housing benefit and council tax benefit.

### Social Security Benefits

**Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on departmental policy, or performance targets relating to benefit payments made to claimants who are patients detained under the Mental Health Acts and on leave of absence from hospital with particular reference to whether they are entitled to receive full entitlement to state benefits as soon as they leave hospital; what reassessment they undergo on leaving hospital; who is responsible for informing his Department that a patient so detained is on leave of absence from hospital; what reductions are made to the level of state benefits of patients so detained; and whether detained patients allowed leave of absence from hospital for rehabilitation receive lower benefits than the level to which they had been entitled before they were detained. [22131]

**Mr. Hague:** With the exception of people transferred to hospital from prison while still under sentence, people detained in hospitals under the Mental Health Acts are treated in the same way as any other person in hospital. The effect of a period in hospital on the main benefits likely to be in payment to a patient are detailed in the table. Provided that the person still satisfies the conditions of entitlement, benefits are normally restored in full when a person leaves hospital—whether on leave or permanently. No other re-assessment is needed unless the person's general circumstances have changed.

It is the responsibility of the individual to tell the Department when he leaves hospital.

| *Weeks* | |
|---|---|
| 4 | Attendance allowance and disability living allowance (care component) withdrawn. |
| | Severe disability premium in income support withdrawn. |
| 6 | Retirement pension, widow's benefit, incapacity benefit, severe disablement allowance reduced by £11.75 for a person with a dependant, or £23.50 for a person without a department. |
| | Income support reduced to £14.70 for a single person and by £11.75 where the patient is one of a couple. |
| 52 | Retirement pension, widow's benefit, incapacity benefit, severe disablement allowance reduced by £11.75 for a person with a dependant and reduced to £11.75 for a person without a dependant. |
| | Income support reduced to £11.75. Members of a couple must make separate claims. |

*Note:*

Periods in hospital punctuated by periods of leave of four weeks or less are aggregated.

### Accounting Officers

**Mr. Meacher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many times in the last 10 years, and on which dates, his Departmental accounting officer has issued a minute in that role; and what was the issue in each case. [22565]

**Mr. Hague:** Where a Minister overrules an accounting officer's advice on an issue of propriety or regularity or one of value for money, the accounting officer should request a written instruction from the Minister to take the action in question.

All such instructions are reported to the Comptroller and Auditor General who, after making whatever investigations he considers appropriate, will report his findings to the Committee of Public Accounts.

No such directions have been issued as stated by the Secretary of State in his reply to the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney, (Mr. Rowlands) on 24 February 1994, *Official Report*, column *372*.

### Mortgage Interest

**Ms Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much money his Department expects to save as the result of the new regulations relating to assistance for mortgage interest payments; and what they estimate is the average saving per claimant. [23026]

**Mr. Roger Evans:** The Social Security Advisory Committee has consulted widely on the proposals for changes to assistance with mortgage interest payments, and I expect to receive its report shortly. The financial effects will depend on the final details of the scheme, which will not be decided until I have studied its report.

**Ms Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people received assistance with

mortgage interest payments in each year since 1990; and what is the current average level of assistance, by standard economic region. [23028]

**Mr. Roger Evans:** I will write to the hon. Member shortly.

### Housing Benefit

**Mr. Austin-Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment he has made of the likely effect of his proposed changes to housing benefit rules, which take effect from October, on those living in housing association-owned special needs hostels and sheltered housing for the elderly. [23079]

**Mr. Roger Evans:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Stockport (Ms Coffey) on 2 May, *Official Report*, column *165*.

**Mr. Austin-Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received regarding his proposed changes to housing benefit rules, which take effect from October; and if he will make a statement. [23080]

**Mr. Roger Evans:** We await the report from the Social Security Advisory Committee following its public consultation exercise on our proposals for housing benefit changes from October 1995. We have also formally consulted the local authority associations, from which we have received representations. In addition, we have received representations from other interested parties, including the National Federation of Housing Associations, the Chartered Institute of Housing and the National Association of Citizens' Advice Bureaux, as well as individuals.

### Telephones

**Mr. Donohoe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations his Department has made to the Department of Trade and Industry concerning the need for legislation to prevent the cloning of mobile telephones. [23478]

**Mr. Hague:** None

**Mr. Donohoe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what steps his Department has taken to prevent the cloning of telephones being utilised by his Department; and if his Department has discussed this matter with any official agencies; [23463]

(2) what costs his Department has incurred during the last 12 Months as a result of cloning of mobile telephones being utilised by his Department, with particular reference to the making of unauthorised calls; [23497]

(3) what use his Department makes of hand-held and car-based mobile telephones; what were the costs for each financial year of these services since mobile telephones were first introduced to his Department; and how many mobile telephones are currently in use. [23454]

**Mr. Hague:** I will write to the hon. Member shortly on these matters.

**Mr. Donohoe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many mobile telephones being utilised by his Department have been cloned during the last 12 months. [23500]

**Mr. Hague:** Ten.

### National Insurance

**Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the effect on Treasury revenue in a full year of raising the upper earnings limit for national insurance by *(a)* £5, *(b)* £10 and *(c)* £15. [23346]

**Mr. Arbuthnot:** It is estimated that, for 1995–96, the additional income from class 1 employee contributions and class 4 self-employed contributions would be:

(a) £55 million

(b) £115 million

(c) £165 million

*Source:*

Government Actuary's Department

**Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the effect on Treasury revenue in a full year of raising the lower earnings limit for national insurance to the level of the personal tax allowance; and how many people would be taken out of national insurance by this measure. [23347]

**Mr. Arbuthnot:** It is estimated that there would be a reduction in national insurance contributions of about £500 million in a full year and that about 500,000 people would be removed from the coverage of the national insurance scheme.

### Jobseeker's Allowance

**Mr. Bradley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, what is his estimate of the cost, in each of the years 1996–97, 1997–98 and 1998–99, of reinstating contributory jobseeker's allowance for a period of 312 days in respect of *(a)* people who are registered disabled, *(b)* people who move from incapacity benefit to sign on as unemployed and *(c)* people who place restrictions on their availability for work because of their physical or mental condition. [21601]

**Mr. Roger Evans** *[holding answer Friday 28 April]:* Extending the period of contribution-based jobseeker's allowance to 312 days, in respect of people who move from incapacity benefit as a result of the new medical test, would bring costs of £10 million in 1996–97, £15 million in 1997–98, and from £10 million in 1998–99.

No information is available relating to the proportion of unemployed claimants who are registered disabled. It is not possible to estimate the number of claimants likely to agree restrictions on their availability for work because of their physical or mental condition under jobseeker's allowance.

*Notes:*

1. Assumes 2.4 million unemployed and an unemployment benefit caseload of 500,000 in 1997–98 if jobseeker's allowance had not been introduced.

2. Figures rounded to the nearest £5 million.

3. Figures make no allowance for any possible claims deterrent effect of the new medical test in incapacity benefit.

4. Estimates made using data from the 1990–91–92 family expenditure surveys uprated to 1994–95 and benefit rates.

### Social Fund

**Lady Olga Maitland:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has received the Social Security Advisory Committee's report on his proposals for changes to the social fund funeral payments scheme; and if he will make a statement. [19209]

**Mr. Roger Evans** *[pursuant to his reply, 5 April 1995, c. 1231]:* I can confirm that the Social Security Advisory Committee's report, and the Secretary of State for Social Security's response to it, have been laid before Parliament today along with amending regulations for a new social fund funeral payment scheme which take effect from 5 June.

### Child Support Agency

**Mr. Gapes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many absent parents have received an interim assessment from the Child Support Agency since its inception; [21793]

(2) how many absent parents who have received an interim assessment from the Child Support Agency since its inception have subsequently become *(a)* unemployed and *(b)* recipients of income support; [21794]

(3) what steps the Government are taking to monitor the relationship between Child Support Agency interim assessment orders and subsequent unemployment. [21795]

**Mr. Burt:** The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for the chief executive, Miss Ann Chant. She will write to the hon. Member.

*Letter from Miss Ann Chant to Mr. Mike Gapes, dated 5 May 1995:*

I am replying to your Parliamentary Questions to the Secretary of State for Social Security about Interim Maintenance Assessments (IMA) issued by the Child Support Agency.

Since launch to the end of February 1995 the Agency completed and issued a total of 133,167 IMAs. From April this year there have been changes in the use of IMAs; a new higher rate IMA may be imposed on high earners; a non-punitive IMA has been introduced for self-employed earners; a protected earnings rate has been introduced in cases where an IMA is being collected via a deductions from earnings order, and once the absent parent (AP) has provided all required information, their liability under the preceding IMA will revert to that of the Full Maintenance Assessment.

The Agency cannot monitor the relationship between the imposition of IMAs and any subsequent unemployment of APs. IMAs are imposed either because an AP fails to provide the Agency with the necessary information required to carry out a maintenance assessment, or, as in the majority of such cases, the AP fails to return a maintenance enquiry form at all. An analysis of the number of APs who become unemployed following the imposition of an IMA is not possible, as the Agency often has no personal details of the AP other than their name and address.

I hope this is helpful.

### Disability Living Allowance Unit, Blackpool

**Mr. Wareing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the arrests of four members of staff at the DLA unit, Blackpool; what were their duties; and what plans there are to review the cases with which they had dealt. [22630]

**Mr. Hague:** This is a matter for Mr. Ian Magee, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member.

*Letter from Ian Magee to Mr. Robert N. Wareing, dated 4 May 1995:*

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about the Disability Living Allowance Unit.

As the matter to which you refer is sub judice, I regret that I am unable to comment at this time.

## SCOTLAND

### Civil Servants

**Mr. Ainger:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many civil service appointments were made to administrative assistant and administrative officer posts in his Department and the agencies for which he is accountable in each quarter from September 1993 until April 1995. [21760]

**Mr. Lang** *[holding answer 1 May 1995]:* The number of Scottish Office employees appointed at administrative assistant and administrative officer levels is shown in the table. The figures comprise appointments to associated Departments and agencies. They include both fixed-term and permanent appointments, but exclude casual appointments, promotions and regradings.

*Appointments made to administrative assistant and administrative officer posts by the Scottish Office: September 1993–April 1995*

| | *September 1993–November 1993* | *December 1993–February 1994* | *March 1994–May 1994* | *June 1994–August 1994* | *September 1994–November 1995* | *December 1994–February 1995* | *March 1995–April 1995* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Administrative Assistant | 65 | 17 | 5 | 10 | 6 | 8 | 20 |
| Administrative Officer | 1 | 1 | 0 | 6 | 3 | 2 | 0 |
| Total | 66 | 18 | 5 | 16 | 9 | 10 | 20 |

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the individual value of each *(a)* compulsory early retirement and *(b)* flexible early retirement package received by civil servants leaving his Department on grounds of limited efficiency in each of the last five years. [22079]

**Mr. Lang** *[holding answer 2 May 1995]:* Compensation payments for early retirement on grounds of limited efficiency are age, salary and service related. Over the period in question, no officers who left the Department on limited efficiency grounds received compulsory early retirement terms. Seven left under the flexible early retirement package:

1 in 1990–91

1 in 1991–92

1 in 1992–93

3 in 1993–94
1 in 1994–95

The payments received by these officers are listed in descending order of magnitude. Year dates are not shown to avoid individuals being identified.

| *Annual compensation payment to age 60 (rate pa) £* | *Superannuation lump sum (Approx.) £* | *Lump sum compensation payment* | *Compensation in lieu of notice* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 17,968 | 53,906 | none | none |
| 16,601 | 49,803 | none | none |
| 9,369 | 28,918 | none | none |
| 8,837 | 26,513 | none | none |
| 7,244 | 21,732 | none | none |
| 7,164 | 21,494 | none | none |
| 5,710 | 17,131 | none | none |

### Bank Holidays

**Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy to protect traditional Scottish bank holidays in the event of the Scottish clearing banks harmonising bank holidays with their English counterparts. [22157]

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** The statutory bank holidays in Scotland remain those set out in schedule 1 to the Banking and Financial Dealings Act 1971 or proclaimed each year under that Act. Their purpose is to safeguard the banks if they choose to close on these days. The days on which banks decide to close or open however, is a matter for them. Statutory bank holidays have always had less general significance in Scotland than in other parts of the UK. Public, or local, holidays, determined by each local authority for its own area, tend to be observed rather than the statutory bank holidays. This is part of the Scottish tradition.

**Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to amend the Banking and Financial Dealings Act 1971 to impose a statutory obligation that Scottish clearing banks must close on Scottish bank holidays. [22159]

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** The Government believe that it would not be right to make bank holidays prescriptive. That would be over-regulatory and would deny freedom of choice.

**Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what guidance his Department will give to the Scottish clearing banks on the issue of harmonisation of bank holidays; and what guidance has been given in past discussion. [22158]

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** This is not a matter in which the Government have any role. The Scottish clearing banks took the decision to adjust their bank holidays for business reasons, after taking their own legal advice. They did not consult the Government, nor were they required to do so.

**Mrs. Ray Michie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next plans to meet the banking unions to discuss harmonisation of bank holidays throughout the United Kingdom. [22156]

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** The days on which banks open and close is a matter for the banks to discuss with their employees. There are therefore no plans for any such meeting.

### Shell Petroleum (Brent Spar Terminal)

**Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what permissions have been given to Shell Petroleum to dispose of the terminal Brent Spar in deep water; and what assessment has been made of the ultimate destination of arsenic, cadmium and other dangerous substances. [22658]

**Sir Hector Monro:** The Scottish Office has issued a licence under the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985 and an authorisation under the Radioactive Substances Act 1993 to allow disposal of the Brent Spar buoy, stripped of detachable equipment, at sea in accordance with the abandonment programme approved by the President of the Board of Trade. In line with our obligations under international conventions, a thorough survey was undertaken to identify the deep-sea disposal site in the north Atlantic to deposit the Spar at a depth in excess of 2,000 m and beyond the reach of fishing activity. Detailed assessments have been made of the likely impact on the environment of this disposal method, including what contaminants remain in the Brent Spar. It has been concluded that any effects of these contaminants on the marine environment will be negligible.

### Epilepsy

**Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many neurologists, neuropsychiatrists and neurosurgeons specialising in epilepsy there are in Scotland; how this relates to the recommended level in each case; and if he will make a statement. [22432]

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Information on staff specialising in epilepsy is not collected centrally. Neuropsychiatry is not recognised as a separate specialty.

The whole-time equivalent numbers of consultants in neurology and neurosurgery at 30 September 1994 were:

Neurology: 21.0
Neurosurgery: 16.5

**Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many epilepsy clinics there are in Scotland; how this relates to the recommended level; and if he will make a statement; [22433]

(2) what is the mean waiting time for out-patient treatment for epilepsy in each health board area in Scotland; how this relates to the patient's charter waiting times; what plans he has to improve the position; and if he will make a statement. [22434]

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** The information requested is not available centrally.

### Dental Services

**Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of dental practitioners in Caithness and Sutherland working within the national health service. [21781]

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton** *[holding answer 4 May 1995]:* Dentists who wish to provide NHS general dental services must join a health board's dental list. At present, there are 86 general dental practitioners on Highland health board's dental list, of whom 15 have practice addresses within Caithness and Sutherland.

**Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has about the number of dental practitioners working in the highlands who have left the national health service over the past two years giving their reasons for so doing. [21782]

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** A dentist must join a health board dental list in order to provide NHS dental services. A dentist can withdraw from a health board dental list at any time, subject to giving the required notice, and need not give a reason for withdrawing. The information requested is not therefore available.

**Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will list the dental practices in Banff and Macduff that are still registering patients and that are not exempt from dental charges, under the national health service; and if he will make a statement; [22716]

(2) if he will list the dental practices in the town of Turriff that are still registering and treating patients under the national health service; and if he will make a statement. [22717]

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** The information requested is not available centrally.

**Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what action he intends taking to improve the provision of national health service dental facilities in the town of Turriff, Banff and Macduff; and if he will make a statement. [22718]

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Grampian health board is responsible for NHS dental services within its area. If necessary, a health board may seek approval from the Secretary of State to appoint a salaried dentist to ensure access to NHS services.

**Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State if he will list the distances a resident of *(a)* Turriff, *(b)* Banff and *(c)* Macduff would have to travel to attend a dental practice registering patients, not exempt from dental charges, under the national health service; and if he will make a statement. [22719]

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** The information requested is not available centrally.

### Private Hospitals

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the NHS hospitals built by the private sector and operated by the private sector; and if he will make a statement. [22666]

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** There are no NHS hospitals in Scotland built and operated by the private sector.

### Birds of Prey

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of the number and species of birds of prey poisoned in each year since 1987. [22363]

**Sir Hector Monro:** The numbers and species of birds of prey recorded as having been poisoned in Scotland are:

| | *1987* | *1988* | *1989* | *1990* | *1991* | *1992* | *1993* | *1994* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Buzzard | 9 | 11 | 11 | 12 | 11 | 11 | 18 | 13 |
| Eagle | 2 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Hen Harrier | — | 1 | — | 2 | — | 1 | — | — |
| Peregrine Falcon | — | — | 3 | — | — | — | — | 2 |
| Red Kite | — | — | 1 | — | — | — | 1 | — |
| Sparrowhawk | — | — | — | — | — | 1 | — | — |
| Tawny Owl | — | 2 | — | — | — | — | — | — |
| Total | 11 | 18 | 16 | 16 | 12 | 14 | 20 | 16 |

### Ravenspark Hospital

**Mr. Donohoe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the current position in respect of conclusion of the contract between Irvine Care Ltd. and Ayrshire and Arran health board for the replacement facility for Ravenspark hospital. [23492]

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** The contract has not yet been signed. Irvine Health Care Ltd. is still awaiting planning permission for the project. That will be considered by Cunninghame district council later this month.

### Medium Secure Units

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list by regional health authority and by district health authority the current number of beds in medium secure units run by health authorities; what were the figures for each of the last four years; and if he will make a statement. [23508]

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Medium and high security beds for Scotland are provided solely at the state hospital, Carstairs.

The state hospital has a maximum capacity of 340 beds. This level of provision has not varied in the last four years.

## DEFENCE

### Phosgene Gas

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what quantity of phosgene gas cannisters has been dumped by his Department in Lune Deeps, near Fleetwood, since 1965. [22143]

**Mr. Soames:** None.

### Former Yugoslavia

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what assessment his Department has made of the command structure required for any possible pull-out of UN forces from the former Yugoslavia; [23019]

(2) what assessment his Department has made of the role that NATO's allied reaction corps would play in any possible UN withdrawal from the former Yugoslavia; [23020]

(3) what assessment his Department has made of the number of troops required to enable a withdrawal of UN forces from the former Yugoslavia; and if he will make a statement; [23021]

(4) what assessment his Department has made of the time scale required for any withdrawal of UN troops from the former Yugoslavia; and if he will make a statement. [23023]

**Mr. Soames:** At the request of the UN Secretary-General, NATO is continuing with contingency planning for a NATO commanded operation to withdraw UN forces from the former Yugoslavia, should that become necessary. The UK is co-operating closely with NATO and good progress has been made. It would not, however, be appropriate for me to comment on the details of the plan, which are a matter for NATO.

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if his Department has taken part in Exercise Arcade Guard relating to a possible UN withdrawal from the former Yugoslavia; what lessons were learnt as a consequence of this exercise; and if he will make a statement. [23022]

**Mr. Soames:** Some 400 UK Army personnel took part in NATO's Exercise Arcade Guard. NATO is currently evaluating the results of the exercise, which concluded on 28 April.

**Mr. MacDonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what body made the initial recommendation to withdraw the British contingent from Gorazde; if he will make it his policy that the British contingent will not be withdrawn until a replacement contingent is in place together with all necessary equipment; and if he will make a statement. [22145]

**Mr. Soames:** The Government do not intend to replace British troops in Gorazde when their tour ends in September 1995. The UN was informed of this decision in April to allow it sufficient time to identify suitable replacements.

**Mr. MacDonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will end the practice of describing Bosnian Government forces as Moslem forces on the weekly situation maps produced for public circulation by British forces Headquarters in Bosnia.

**Mr. Soames:** I have asked for the map to be amended.

### Bevin Boys

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recognition is being given during the commemorations to mark the 50th anniversary of the end of the second world war for the role of Bevin boys who served in British coal mines. [23024]

**Mr. Soames:** Events to mark the 50th anniversaries of VE day and VJ day offer a welcome opportunity to pay tribute not only to the military but to the civilian contribution to the war effort. The Government are well aware of the vital role played by many who were not in uniform during the second world war. The Bevin boys have been invited, through the Bevin Boys Association, to be represented at this year's commemorative events.

### Defence Establishment, Malvern

**Dr. Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many personnel at his Department's Defence Establishment at Malvern were *(a)* administrators and *(b)* scientists in each of the last 10 years; and if he will make a statement. [23045]

**Mr. Freeman:** This is a matter for the chief executive of the Defence Evaluation and Research Agency. I have therefore asked him to reply.

*Letter from John Chisholm to Dr. David Clark, dated 9 May 1995:*

In today's written answer the Secretary of State for Defence informed you that I would be replying to your question concerning the number of administrators and scientists employed at DRA Malvern over the last 10 years.

I am only able to provide you with figures showing staff numbers since 1 April 1992. Although the DRA was formed in April 1991 our staff database was not created until later in the year. I do not, therefore, have a breakdown of the 1991 staff numbers nor do I have figures for the earlier years. I have, however, shown in the table below the overall numbers working at Malvern. This separately identifies scientific and other technical staff who make an important contribution to our work. On the specific point about scientists, you will see that their numbers have grown significantly under the agency.

| *DRA Malvern* | *1 April 1992* | *1 April 1993* | *1 April 1994* | *31 March 1995* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Scientists | 690 | 768 | 842 | 966 |
| Administrators | 185 | 180 | 160 | 168 |
| Other technical staff (PTO's, Engineers etc) | 404 | 382 | 281 | 237 |
| Other support staff (industrials etc) | 369 | 408 | 404 | 342 |
| Total | 1,648 | 1,738 | 1,687 | 1,713 |

I hope this is helpful.

### Mr. Perry Miller

**Dr. David Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 1 May, *Official Report*, column *84*, if he will specify the reasons for the departure in February 1993 of Mr. Perry Miller, his former special adviser; and what payments were made to Mr. Perry Miller. [23046]

**Mr. Rifkind:** Mr. Perry Miller informed me that he wished to end his appointment as my special adviser in order to take up a position in the private sector. Mr. Miller gave notice of his resignation as required under his terms and conditions of employment and received no payment on giving up his appointment.

### Export Services Organisation

**Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the relationship between the Defence Export Services Organisation and the Defence Sales Agency. [22578]

**Mr. Freeman:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply given on 20 December 1994, *Official Report,* column *1197,* about the function of the Disposal Sales Agency.

### Accounting Officers

**Mr. Meacher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many times in the last 10 years, and on which dates, his departmental accounting officer has issued a minute in that role; and what was the issue in each case. [22567]

**Mr. Soames:** Where a Minister overrules an accounting officer's advice on an issue of propriety or regularity or one of value for money, the accounting officer should request a written instruction from the Minister to take the action in question.

Cases in which such an instruction has been issued were set out in my answers to the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) on 10 March 1994, *Official Report,* column *401,* and to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) on 22 March 1994, *Official Report,* column *174,* and in the statement by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence on 9 March 1995, *Official Report,* columns 459–60.

### Job Losses

**Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the reduction by relevant category in the number of his Department's posts resulting from the competing for quality programme. [22571]

**Mr. Freeman:** Under my Department's delegated financial structure, budget holders operate within financial allocations which cover a range of operating costs, including staff. Between April 1992 and September 1994, some 14,700 service and civilian posts were reviewed under the CFQ programme. As a result, reductions of 11,167 posts have been proposed. Details of the categories of the posts reduced are not held centrally.

### Army Base Repair Organisation

**Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement on the possible sale of ABRO Old Dalby, Leicestershire. [22775]

**Mr. Freeman:** As announced on 31 January, *Official Report,* column *556,* we are proceeding with the withdrawal of MOD activity away from the workshop as my Department is no longer able to make effective use of the modern high technology facilities at the site for their existing purpose. We are considering possible alternative defence uses for the site, but in the interim every effort will be made to encourage the private sector to put forward innovative proposals for alternative uses. My Department is working closely with the local authorities on this. Marketing consultants have been appointed and we will shortly be mounting an expressions of interest marketing campaign to determine what demand there might be for commercial uses for the site.

### Portland Naval Base

**Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the meetings held in the last 12 months between *(a)* Ministers and *(b)* officials of his Department and prospective bidders for the purchase of the Portland naval base. [23129]

**Mr Soames:** No Ministers have had meetings in the last 12 months to discuss with prospective purchasers the sale of the Portland naval base. Officials have met prospective purchasers on 11 occasions during that period.

**Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the *(a)* representations received from officials of the National Audit Office and *(b)* the meetings with officials of the NAO held to discuss the role of the Portland naval base. [23131]

**Mr. Soames:** A meeting about the sale of the Portland naval base was held between my officials and those of the National Audit Office on 25 April. No representations have been received from officials of the National Audit Office about the sale of the site.

### Al Yamamah Offset Programme

**Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the progress and the value of offset projects arising from the Al Yamamah I and II agreement. [23130.]

**Mr. Freeman:** Six projects have been implemented since the Al Yamamah offset programme was launched in 1989. They are as follows:

1. Saudi development and training—providing a wide range of vocational training packages and performing training assessment tasks. The company is fully operational.

2. Aircraft accessories and components co-servicing of vital aircraft components. Commenced full operations in mid 1993.

3. Glaxo Saudi Arabia—a facility manufacturing ethical pharmaceutical products. Trial production commenced in March 1995.

4. United Sugar Co—Tate and Lyle are shareholders in a world scale sugar refinery project. Construction will start in June 1995.

5. Middle East Propulsion Co—the repair and maintenance of civil and military gas turbines. Rolls-Royce are partners in this project. Factory construction to start in mid 1995.

6. Cyclar—a licensing venture to produce aromatics from Liquefied Petroleum Gas using a process jointly developed by UOP and BP. The project is still at the pre-engineering stage.

The total value of the projects is approximately £460 million.

### Defence Equipment Gifts

**Mr. Byers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 1 May, *Official Report,* columns *87-88,* if he will list the overseas Governments receiving gifts of defence equipment since April 1992, the date of the gift, the nature of the defence equipment and its estimated value. [22915]

**Mr. Freeman:** The information is as follows:

| *Country* | *Date* | *Item* | *Value £* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Canada | 15/10/92 | Armoured vehicles | 1,600 |
| Nepal | 16/02/93 | 70 light machine guns | 7,000 |
| Lebanon | 08/10/93 | 500 self-loading rifles | 40,000 |
| Albania | 21/12/93 | ACR430 system | 10,000 |
| France | 31/03/94 | AR martel missiles | 30,000 |
| Belize | 11/03/94 | Harrier GR3 | 1,200 |
| Nepal | 01/08/94 | SLRs LMGs | 10,000 |
| Jordan | 15/12/94 | Single Sea Hunter andspares | 22,000 |
| Australia | 09/01/95 | Gannet MKT5 | 5,000 |

### Auxiliary Air Force

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what redundancy or other compensation payments are available to members of the Auxiliary Air Force whose contracts were terminated as part of "Options for Change" in April 1994. [22768]

**Mr. Menzies-Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what redundancy or other payments will be made to members of the Auxiliary Air Force whose contracts were terminated as part of "Options for Change" in April 1994. [23332]

**Mr. Soames:** There is no provision in the regulations for the Royal Auxiliary Air Force to make redundancy or other compensation payments to those who are discharged on the disbandment of their unit.

**Mr. Menzies-Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the employment status of members of the Auxiliary Air Force who were employed on various bases up until April 1994, and whose contracts were terminated as part of "Options for Change". [22767]

**Mr. Soames:** All those who served with the two Royal Auxiliary Air Force units which disbanded on 18 April last year were volunteer members of that force.

### Magherafelt Base (Fire)

**Mr. Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, when he intends to publish the results of the inquiry into the fire at the Royal Irish Regiment base in Magherafelt. [22916]

**Mr. Soames:** The board of inquiry into the fire at the Royal Irish Regiment's base at Magherafelt has not yet been completed. The results of the inquiry will be made available as soon as possible after completion.

### Telephones

**Mr. Donohoe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what use his Department makes of hand-held and car-based mobile telephones; what were the costs for each financial year of these services since mobile telephones were first introduced to his Department; and how many mobile telephones are currently in use. [23438]

**Mr. Soames:** Some use is made within my Department of hand-held and car-based mobile telephones for routine administrative purposes. No central record is maintained, however, either of the numbers of mobile telephones in use at present or of the aggregate cost to the Department. This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

### HMS Victorious

**Mr. Bill Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many missiles HMS Victorious will collect from the United States facility at Kings bay prior to her deployment; and if he will make a statement. [23521]

**Mr. Rifkind:** HMS Victorious will collect 12 Trident D5 missiles from the US Navy's strategic weapon facility Atlantic at Kings Bay, Georgia, prior to her deployment at around the turn of the year.

## HEALTH

### Nurses' Pay

**Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the percentage change in nurses' pay in the last six years; what data source were used in calculating it; if she will give details of the calculation; and if the figure applies to nurses across the United Kingdom. [23294]

**Mr. Malone:** The Department of Employment's new earnings survey data show that nurses' average earnings in Great Britain increased by 78 per cent. between April 1988 and April 1994.

**Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what account the Government have taken of the change in clinical grading in calculating the change in nurses' pay in the past six years. [23295]

**Mr. Malone:** The 78 per cent. increase in nurses' average earnings takes account of all the factors which have led to increases in earnings.

**Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many NHS trusts have agreed the terms of local pay schemes for nurses and midwives. [21678]

**Mr. Malone:** It is understood that, by 2 May, at least 195 trusts in England had made their offers known, of which 147 are of around 3 per cent.

### Medical Negligence

**Mr. Kevin Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cases of medical negligence involving the national health service have been settled in the last three years; and how many have remained outstanding. [22204]

**Mr. Malone:** Information about outstanding cases is not available centrally. For information about numbers of cases settled, I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) on 6 March at columns *41-42*.

**Mr. Kevin Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what assessment her Department has made of the procedures for dealing with claims for medical negligence in the national health service; and what proposals she has to improve the system; [22199]

(2) what plans she has to speed up the process of dealing with claims for medical negligence involving the national health service. [22200]

**Mr. Malone:** The clinical negligence scheme for trusts, which I announced on 29 March, will contribute to improved claims handling in those national health service trusts which decide to become members. Guidance will also be made available to all trusts on claims handling procedures. In addition, we are introducing a pilot mediation scheme in two English regions which will enable the parties to agree a satisfactory outcome without going to court.

**Mr. Kevin Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the latest figures for the length of time taken to resolve cases of medical negligence involving the national health service. [22202]

**Mr. Malone:** This information is not available centrally.

### Opencast Mining

**Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what information she has on medical surveys in the United Kingdom linking high levels of serious illness with dust from opencast mining, with particular reference to areas covered and number of cases; [22616]

(2) if she will commission monitoring of levels of serious illness in areas where there is opencast mining generating significant levels of dust. [22617]

**Mr. Sackville:** Research on the effects on health of air pollution, including that of dust from opencast mining, has been referred to the independent advisory Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants. COMEAP has considered the suggestion that opencast coal mining might have a deleterious effect on the health of those living close to the workings. A study by Temple in 1992 was considered and COMEAP agreed that the results reported were consistent with an association between the opening of an opencast mine and an increase in asthma consultations. However, the committee considered that local awareness of the opening of the mine and concern about its possible effects on health were plausible explanations for the association and that further work would be needed to sustain a causal hypothesis.

In 1994, the Department of the Environment, the Department of Health and the Medical Research Council issued a joint call for proposals for work on air pollution and respiratory disease. The Department is currently considering the proposals that were put forward, including studies on the health effects of opencast mining.

### Residential Care

**Mr. Alan Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will commission research to ascertain whether local authorities are using the personal expenses allowance to support married people whose spouse is in a local authority provided residential or nursing home care; and if she will make a statement. [22592]

**Mr. Bowis:** We have invited, but not as yet received, hard evidence to suggest that local authorities are not sensibly using their discretion to help spouses at home. However, the residential accommodation charging rules are kept under constant review, including whether any action in this area is necessary.

### Cervical Cancer

**Ms Janet Anderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what reports she has received of women suffering from cervical cancer whose condition has worsened as a result of experimental treatment carried out by health trusts and health authorities. [22605]

**Mr. Sackville:** We are aware that several women who received radiotherapy treatment for cervical cancer in the 1980s have experienced significant adverse effects which they believe to have been caused by the treatment that they received as part of a research project.

### Medical (Professional Performance) Bill

**Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her oral statement of 25 April in response to an intervention by the hon. Member for Croydon, North-East, (Mr. Congdon), *Official Report*, column 700, in what circumstances the provisions of the Medical (Professional Performance) Bill would apply in the case of a single act committed by a doctor falling short of serious professional misconduct. [22408]

**Mr. Malone:** A single incident would come within the performance procedures if the action of the doctor suggested that his general standard of professional performance could be seriously deficient. In those circumstances, the single incident would trigger an assessment to establish whether there was a pattern of serious deficiency.

### NHS Trust Hospitals

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the NHS trust hospitals built by the private sector and operated by the private sector; and if she will make a statement. [22665]

**Mr. Sackville:** There are no national health service trust hospitals built by the private sector and operated by the private sector.

### Dental Services

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the provision for transplant patients in respect of their specific dental care needs; and what are the particular treatments and financial assistance available for the dental care needs of transplant patients. [22670]

**Mr. Malone:** The range of treatments available to transplant patients is not different from that available to other dental patients. The general dental service, hospital dental service and community dental service are able to provide a range of treatments which deal comprehensively with any complication which may arise as a result of immunosuppression treatment in transplant patients. Transplant patients are subject to the same eligibility requirements for exemption from, or financial assistance towards, dental costs as other dental patients.

### Yellow Card System

**Ms Hodge:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of general practitioners are making use of yellow card systems for reporting adverse side-effects of drugs. [22926]

**Mr. Sackville:** The survey by the department of clinical pharmacology at the university of Newcastle upon Tyne and the Medicines Control Agency published in March 1995 found that 77 per cent. of general practitioners had reported one or more suspected adverse reactions through the yellow card scheme.

### NHS Trust Meetings

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will include in the new code on openness in the NHS a requirement for NHS trusts to hold their meetings in public and for health authorities to stop the practice of routinely closing their meetings to the public for significant parts of their agendas for items which are not confidential. [22731]

**Mr. Malone:** It is already a requirement that national health service trusts must hold an annual public meeting. The code of practice on openness in the NHS, published in April 1995, points to holding more public meetings as good practice, in line with the steps already being taken by an increasing number of trusts.

Health authorities must hold all their board meetings in public, though there is a provision for certain issues to be taken in a private part of the meeting. Whether and when to exclude the press and public is a matter for authorities themselves to decide.

### National Vocational Qualifications

**Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many, and what proportion of, vacancies advertised by her Department, and by each of her Department's agencies, in the last three years have listed the attainment of NVQs as an acceptable entry requirement; and, of those, how many have required *(a)* level 1 NVQs, *(b)* level 2 NVQs, *(c)* level 3 NVQs and *(d)* other level NVQs. [22955]

**Mr. Sackville:** No advertisements placed by the Department or its agencies listed the attainment of national vocational qualifications as an entry requirement.

### Respite Care

**Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she is taking to ensure that the respite care needs of disabled people are fulfilled. [22694]

**Mr. Bowis:** The improvement in provision of respite care for disabled people has been a key objective of the community care reforms from the outset. Local authorities and health authorities must make provision for all local needs, including those for respite care. In the 1994–95 community care monitoring round, local authorities reported that they had been able to increase the number of respite care admissions above those made in the same period in the previous year. An extra £30 million is available this year, in the special transitional grant, for developing home and respite care.

### Accounting Officers

**Mr. Meacher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many times in the last 10 years, and on which dates, her departmental accounting officer has issued a minute in that role; and what was the issue in each case. [22555]

**Mr. Sackville:** Available records show no cases in the last 10 years in which the accounting officer has requested a written instruction from a Minister because the Minister has overruled the accounting officer's advice on an issue of propriety, regularity or value for money.

### Treatment Costs

**Mrs. Beckett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the percentage change in the average cost of treating an acute patient between 1982–83 and 1992–93. [22776]

**Mr. Sackville:** Figures for 1992–93 are shown in the table. It is not possible to compare average costs between 1982–83 and 1992–93 because of changes in accounting practices. Since 1991–92, figures have included overheads and capital charges.

*Acute Specialties: Average Costs*[1]

| | *In-patients including day cases(cost per finished consultant episode) £* | *Out-patients cost per attendance £* |
|---|---|---|
| 1992–93 | 1,009.27 | 56.37 |

[1] *Source:*

Annual financial returns of regional, district and special health authorities for the London postgraduate teaching hospitals and national health service trusts.

### Heatherwood Hospital

**Mrs. Beckett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what has been the change in the provision of paediatric, maternity and accident and emergency services at Heatherwood hospital over the past year: and what change is planned in the next year; [22830]

(2) if she will make a statement on the consultations on the future of Heatherwood and Wexham Park NHS trust; [22831]

(3) if she will make it her policy that existing paediatric, maternity and accident and emergency services be maintained at Heatherwood hospital before the outcome of the consultation on the future of Heatherwood and Wexham Park Hospitals trust. [22829]

**Mr. Sackville:** There has been no significant change in the provision of paediatric, maternity and accident and emergency services at Heatherwood hospital over the past year. The future pattern of these services is currently the subject of public consultation and this has been extended to 6 June. There will be no change to the provision of these services prior to the outcome of the consultation exercise.

### Camden and Islington Health Authority

**Mrs. Beckett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health from which budget the legal fees and moneys to settle the case of Dr. Chris Johnstone *v.* Camden and Islington health authority will come from; and to what extent her Department has underwritten the costs incurred by Camden and Islington health authority. [22901]

**Mr. Malone:** Any legal costs incurred by Camden and Islington health authority as a result of compensation claims made by former staff who were employed in the 10 trusts located within the boundaries of Camden and Islington before trust status was granted are paid out of a legal costs reserve created by the authority. If any claims were to exceed that reserve, the authority could seek access to the North Thames region's legal reserve.

**Mrs. Beckett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on Dr. Johnstone's case against Camden and Islington health authority and its settlement with particular reference to her Department's involvement; and if she will indicate how much Camden and Islington health authority has spent in the last six years in legal fees on this case. [22902]

**Mr. Malone:** Dr. Johnstone's legal action began in March 1989 and he withdrew his claim on 24 April 1995. In order to minimise costs, Camden and Islington health authority paid £5,600 into court with the offer to meet his

expenses; there was no admission of liability. The decision to reach this settlement was a matter for the authority and the Department of Health was not involved.

To date, the authority has spent £69,327 in legal fees.

### Mental Health

**Mrs. Beckett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what was the percentage of patient episodes that were mental health related in the last available year; [22754]

(2) what was the total number of mental health related patients episodes in the last available year. [22753]

**Mr. Bowis:** The number and percentage of finished consultant episodes in England for 1993–94, the latest year for which figures are available, for the mental illness and mental handicap specialities are 292,000 and 2.9 per cent.

**Mrs. Beckett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total sum given to mental health related voluntary organisations in the last available year. [22756]

**Mr. Bowis:** Awards under the Department's section 64 general scheme of grants to voluntary organisations in the field of mental illness totalled £2.46 million in 1994–95.

### Housing and Health

**Mrs. Beckett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the relationship between housing and health. [22758]

**Mr. Berry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate she has made of the level of NHS expenditure undertaken each year to treat ill health caused by poor housing conditions. [23186]

**Mr. Sackville:** Due to the complex interaction of a number of factors, it is difficult to quantify the effects of any one factor and to establish causal links between housing conditions and health.

No estimates have been made of national health service expenditure on ill health related to housing conditions.

### Royal Hospitals NHS Trust

**Mr. Sedgemore:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the cost of the inquiry set up in December 1994 by Bruce Martin QC on behalf of the Royal Hospitals NHS trust into the leaking of confidential documents relating to Sir Colin Berry; what were the conclusions of the inquiry; when the findings will be made public; who will bear the cost of the inquiry; and which individual or individuals initiated the inquiry. [22821]

**Mr. Sackville:** This is a matter for the Royal Hospitals NHS trust. The hon. Member may wish to contact the trust chairman, Sir Derek Boorman, for details.

### Junior Doctors

**Mrs. Beckett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many junior doctors are currently working more than an average of 72 hours per week. [22903]

**Mr. Malone:** At 30 September 1994, the latest date for which firm figures are available, there were 3,870 junior doctors contracted for more than an average of 72 hours a week in hard-pressed on-call posts. There were a further 2,196 junior doctors contracted for more than 72 hours a week in non-hard-pressed on-calls posts which are not subject to the current targets for reducing hours.

Our task forces conducted a further monitoring round on 8 February this year and I expect to be able to announce the results of that exercise very shortly.

### Upper Limb Disorders

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research has been conducted into work-related upper limb disorders and repetitive strain injury; and if she will make a statement. [22910]

**Mr. Sackville:** The main agency through which the Government support biomedical and clinical research is the Medical Research Council, which receives its grant in aid from the office of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. The Medical Research Council is not currently supporting any research specifically into work-related upper limb disorders or repetitive strain injury, but is willing to consider scientifically based sound proposals for research. I understand that the Health and Safety Executive, which is responsible for policy on prevention of upper limb disorders caused by work, has sponsored a number of studies with particular emphasis on finding practical means of intervention to prevent and control risks. The Health and Safety Executive is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment.

### Voluntary Organisations (Funding)

**Mrs. Beckett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total sum given by her Department to voluntary organisations in the last available year. [22755]

**Mr. Bowis:** I refer the right hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Barking (Ms Hodge) on 5 April, *Official Report*, column *1212*.

### Death Rates

**Mrs. Beckett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the death rate in socio-economic group *(a)* 1 and *(b)* 5 in each year since 1979. [22757]

**Mr. Sackville:** The information is not available in the form requested.

Mortality of men in the longitudinal study 1976 cohort, by Registrar General's social class, for the periods 1979–81, 1982–85 and 1986–89 will be published with commentary in "Population Trends 80" in June 1995. Infant mortality by Registrar General's social class is published annually in the DH3 mortality series, copies of which are available in the Library.

### Tobacco

**Mrs. Beckett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence she has that *(a)* banning tobacco advertising and *(b)* increasing the price of cigarettes will decrease the consumption of tobacco. [22759]

**Mr. Sackville:** In 1992, the Department reviewed all the available evidence on the effect of tobacco advertising on tobacco consumption. The evidence is listed in the discussion document, "Effect of Tobacco Advertising on Tobacco Consumption", copies of which are available in the Library. The Government concluded on the basis of

the evidence reviewed that a ban on tobacco advertising in the United Kingdom would not have a major impact on reducing levels of smoking.

The Department recently published its view of the effect of price on tobacco consumption in the pamphlet, "The Importance of Price in Reducing Tobacco Consumption", copies of which are available in the Library. Studies show that an increase of 10 per cent. in the price of tobacco products can be expected to lead to a drop of between 3 per cent. and 6 per cent. in tobacco consumption. The studies are cited in the pamphlet.

### Registration of Doctors

**Mrs. Beckett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to seek amendments to the Medical Acts in relation to limited registration of doctors and the standardisation of registration. [22766]

**Mr. Malone:** None at present.

### London Ambulance Service

**Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will require the London ambulance service to postpone further action for changing the distribution of staff and reorganisation of rotas, as recommended by its operational research in health report, until after the publication of the report on the London ambulance service by the Health Committee. [23102]

**Mr. Sackville:** This is a matter for the London ambulance service.

### Unemployment (Health Costs)

**Mr. Berry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate she has made of the level of NHS expenditure undertaken each year to treat ill health caused by unemployment. [23185]

**Mr. Sackville:** None.

### East London and City Health Authority (Land Sales)

**Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health who is responsible for the sale of any building and land within the area of the East London and City health authority found surplus to requirements; what public body has the duty of monitoring or auditing such sales; to what accounts and for what purposes the proceeds of any sale are devoted; and which authorities makes decisions related to the proceeds of such sales. [23612]

**Mr. Sackville:** Property which has not been transferred to a national health service trust is retained by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. That property will be managed by the local regional health authority, which in this instance is the North Thames regional health authority. The regional health authority will dispose of the property. The proceeds will show in its accounts, and it will decide how those proceeds will be used within its capital development programme. Those sale proceeds will be reinvested in the provision of health care.

Land and property transactions in the NHS are subject to policy, procedures and guidance issued by the NHS executive as part of Estatecode.

The accounts of health authorities and NHS trusts are subject to annual examination by auditors appointed by the Audit Commission.

### St. Bartholomew's Hospital

**Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects to receive the report of the body she has established to examine the report on the use of premises at St. Bartholomew's hospital not to be used by the Royal Hospital trust; and what criteria she has asked it to apply in making such recommendations other than to reduce the call on public funds. [23611]

**Mr. Malone:** Sir Ronald Grierson has agreed to lead a project team which is being established to advise the Royal Hospital trust on future use of the Smithfield site. Terms of reference for the project team have yet to be finalised.

### Telephones

**Mr. Donohoe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what use her Department makes of hand-held and car-based mobile telephones; what were the costs for each financial year of these services since mobile telephones were first introduced to her Department; and how many mobile telephones are currently in use. [23436]

**Mr. Sackville:** Mobile telephones are issued to mainly medical, scientific, professional and managerial staff who are required to maintain contact with the Department and the national health service when travelling or while out of normal working hours. Some 500 mobile telephones were in use in 1993–94 at an annual running cost of £302,000. For 1994–95, the corresponding figures are 477 mobile telephones at a cost of £288,000. Figures are not available prior to 1993–94.

**Mr. Donohoe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many mobile telephones used by her Department have been cloned during the last 12 months. [23503]

**Mr. Sackville:** Four.

**Mr. Donohoe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations her Department has made to the Department of Trade and Industry concerning the need for legislation to prevent the cloning of mobile telephones. [23479]

**Mr. Sackville:** None.

**Mr. Donohoe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what costs her Department has incurred during the last 12 months as a result of cloning of mobile telephones being used by her Department, with particular reference to the making of unauthorised calls. [23495]

**Mr. Sackville:** None. The mobile telephone air time providers have not charged the Department for calls made by cloned telephones.

**Mr. Donohoe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps her Department has taken to prevent the cloning of telephones being used by her Department; and if her Department has discussed this matter with any official agencies. [23465]

**Mr. Sackville:** Since cloning has not been a significant problem experienced in the Department, no preventive advice has yet been issued and no discussions have taken place with any official agencies.

### Thalidomide

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research her Department has *(a)* funded and *(b)* evaluated into the transmission of damage caused by Thalidomide across generations. [23512]

**Mr. Malone:** The main agency through which the Government support medical and clinical research is the Medical Research Council, which receives its grant in aid from the office of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. However, the Department has set up an advisory group on research into congenital limb reduction defects and a report was published in February this year recommending that a review of relevant research be carried out. The Government have also established a sub-group of the inter-departmental group on disability to focus on the delivery of health and other services. The group's report will reflect concerns of the Thalidomide action group, the trust and the society.

A number of initiatives are being taken forward by the Government, including providing more detailed knowledge for the medical profession on the longer-term effects of disability caused by Thalidomide.

### Members' Inquiries

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many times in each of the last three years the NHS Executive has issued advice to chairmen and regional directors of health authorities and trusts on how to reply to the written inquiries of hon. Members. [23396]

**Mr. Malone:** It is a primary role of the national health service executive to give advice to the NHS and it has done so on numerous occasions during the past three years.

### Medium Secure Units

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list by regional health authority and by district health authority the current number of beds in medium secure units run by health authorities in England; what were the figures for each of the last four years; and if she will make a statement. [23506]

**Mr. Bowis:** The figures for regions are shown in the table. They do not include places in national health service interim secure psychiatric units—many of which are of medium secure standard—or those funded by health authorities in independent sector facilities. Information for individual districts is not available centrally.

These places have been funded from the NHS central capital programme. Nearly 400 more places funded from this source are due to open by the end of next year.

Total central NHS capital investment in the medium secure programme amounts to more than £100 million—at 1993 prices—of which over £47 million was allocated between 1991 and 1995. In addition, further medium secure places are being developed by regions from mainstream NHS capital programme.

There were no purpose-built NHS medium secure places in 1979, despite the fact that the Glancy committee had recommended them in its 1974 report.

*Medium Secure Units: Places 1991—1995 by Regional Health Authority*

| *Regional health authority 1994* | *Regional health authority 1994* | *January 1991* | *January 1992* | *January 1993* | *June 1994* | *March 1995* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| East Anglian | East Anglian and Oxford | 34 | 34 | 34 | 89 | 121 |
| Oxford | | 25 | 25 | 25 | | |
| North East Thames | North Thames | 14 | 14 | 14 | 108 | 108 |
| North West Thames | | 46 | 46 | 48 | | |
| South East Thames | South Thames | 85 | 85 | 85 | 90 | 90 |
| South West Thames | | — | — | — | | |
| South Western | South West | 60 | 60 | 65 | 94 | 108 |
| Wessex | | 26 | 28 | 29 | | |
| West Midlands | West Midlands | 77 | 77 | 77 | 77 | 77 |
| Trent | Trent | 45 | 48 | 48 | 48 | 48 |
| Yorkshire | North East and Yorkshire | 44 | 44 | 44 | 101 | 101 |
| Northern | | 21 | 25 | 27 | | |
| North Western | North West | 82 | 82 | 82 | 110 | 139 |
| Mersey | | 36 | 36 | 36 | | |
| Total | | 595 | 604 | 614 | 717 | 792 |

*Source:* DH census returns and NHS Estates surveys for the medium secure central capital programme.

## ENVIRONMENT

### Capital Finance Regulations

**Mr. Raynsford:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will amend the capital finance regulations to enable local authorities in England to fund new energy efficiency measures in local authority housing through operating leases without these counting against the authority's capital spending limits. [22267]

**Mr. Robert B. Jones:** The capital finance regulations do not specify the kinds of equipment which may be the subject of operating leases. Instead, they lay down general criteria for such leases which ensure that the risk of ownership remains with the lessor. It is for local authorities and their auditors to decide whether these criteria are met in any particular case.

### Local Government (Derbyshire)

**Mr. McLoughlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people were employed by each local authority in Derbyshire *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time excluding teachers in each year since 1983. [22164]

**Mr. Robert B. Jones:** The information is given in the table.

The levels of employment in individual authorities are not directly comparable because of variations in, for example, population structure and social characteristics, the extent of the use of private firms and contractors and the level of work undertaken for other authorities and public bodies on an agency basis.

*Numbers employed by Local Authorities in Derbyshire: General services (excluding teachers/lecturers and law and order) at March of each year*

| Authority | 1983 | | 1984 | | 1985 | | 1986 | | 1987 | | 1988 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Full-time | Part-time | Full-time | Part-time | Full-time | Part-time | Full-time | Part-time | Full-time | Part-time | Full-time | Part-time |
| Derbyshire | 9,232 | 14,261 | 9,338 | 14,626 | 9,525 | 15,206 | 9,226 | 18,411 | 9,470 | 19,538 | 9,591 | 21,108 |
| Amber Valley | 558 | 73 | 575 | 87 | 561 | 86 | 557 | 82 | 554 | 84 | 547 | 97 |
| Bolsover | 528 | 68 | 536 | 57 | 495 | 82 | 481 | 81 | 466 | 90 | 460 | 106 |
| Chesterfield | 1,343 | 157 | 1,382 | 160 | 1,431 | 75 | 1,482 | 183 | 1,137 | 159 | 1,154 | 189 |
| Derby | 2,405 | 275 | 2,386 | 280 | 2,333 | 253 | 2,294 | 256 | 1,939 | 242 | 1,974 | 248 |
| Derbyshire Dales | 368 | 139 | 384 | 145 | 369 | 149 | 347 | 150 | 358 | 132 | 372 | 137 |
| Erewash | 648 | 93 | 634 | 96 | 624 | 94 | 634 | 98 | 649 | 106 | 641 | 106 |
| High Peak | 479 | 82 | 478 | 96 | 483 | 114 | 467 | 125 | 465 | 140 | 470 | 135 |
| North East Derbyshire | 672 | 165 | 669 | 158 | 661 | 158 | 665 | 153 | 684 | 149 | 690 | 141 |
| South Derbyshire | 305 | 63 | 310 | 79 | 315 | 90 | 320 | 90 | 327 | 85 | 321 | 105 |

| Authority | 1989 | | 1990 | | 1991 | | 1992 | | 1993 | | 1994[1] | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Full-time | Part-time | Full-time | Part-time | Full-time | Part-time | Full-time | Part-time | Full-time | Part-time | Full-time | Part-time |
| Derbyshire | 9,795 | 22,383 | 9,846 | 21,824 | 9,935 | 21,199 | 9,490 | 20,498 | 9,402 | 20,049 | 8,275 | 18,364 |
| Amber Valley | 526 | 70 | 513 | 64 | 487 | 55 | 510 | 72 | 510 | 94 | 517 | 114 |
| Bolsover | 459 | 100 | 455 | 95 | 429 | 89 | 419 | 87 | 411 | 100 | 395 | 98 |
| Chesterfield | 1,139 | 191 | 1,251 | 263 | 1,174 | 302 | 1,134 | 244 | 1,063 | 245 | 1,047 | 254 |
| Derby | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | 1,438 | 174 | 1,460 | 242 | 1,458 | 240 | 1,401 | 245 |
| Derbyshire Dales | 371 | 140 | 331 | 135 | 349 | 116 | 353 | 112 | 351 | 121 | 313 | 134 |
| Erewash | 613 | 101 | 552 | 111 | 543 | 148 | 551 | 183 | 573 | 184 | 552 | 186 |
| High Peak | 447 | 142 | 476 | 166 | 488 | 169 | 465 | 159 | 472 | 166 | 475 | 186 |
| North East Derbyshire | 718 | 144 | 777 | 139 | 759 | 135 | 770 | 165 | 769 | 171 | 737 | 190 |
| South Derbyshire | 328 | 118 | 326 | 115 | 358 | 129 | 362 | 153 | 373 | 153 | 352 | 161 |

*Notes:*

[1] Provisional data.

n/a: Data not available.

1. Within General Services, education, highways, fire services and social services are administered by Derbyshire County Council. The other authorities shown are District Councils which, amongst other services, administer housing, planning and refuse collection.
2. Polytechnics and higher education institutions were transferred from the local authority sector in April 1989.
3. Further education institutions became the responsibility of the Further Education Funding Council in April 1993.

*Source:*

Joint Staffing Watch for England.

## Avian Pest Species

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on avian pest species. [22343]

**Sir Paul Beresford:** I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 1 May, *Official Report,* column 22.

## Peregrine Falcon

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he is taking to protect the peregrine falcon. [22344]

**Sir Paul Beresford:** All naturally occurring wild birds in the UK are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 which fulfils the UK's obligation under the EC birds directive to protect wild birds. Additionally, anyone found guilty of an offence against this species is liable to a special penalty.

Article 4.1 of the birds directive requires member states to take special conservation methods for certain vulnerable species, including the establishment of a network of special protection areas and breeding peregrine falcons are found on several classified sites.

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many licences for taking wild peregrine falcons have been issued in each year since 1984; [22359]

(2) how many quarry licences for falconry were issued in each year since 1984; and what quarry species were involved. [22360]

**Sir Paul Beresford:** Details of licences issued under section 16 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 are contained in the reports by the United Kingdom to the European Community on derogations under article 9 of the directive on the conservation of wild birds, 79/409/EEC. Copies of the derogation report are held in the Library. Figures are not yet available for 1994.

## Wild Birds' Eggs

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment in what circumstances it is possible to confiscate wild birds' eggs which have been illegally collected after the Protection of Birds Act 1954 came into force; how many cases have occurred of eggs collected after 1954 but before 1981 being confiscated in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement. [22345]

**Sir Paul Beresford:** Under the Protection of Birds Act 1954, section 1(c), it was an offence to take or keep wild bird eggs except in specified circumstances. The present

law regarding the possession of wild bird eggs is set out in section 1(2) and (3) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Section 12(1)(b) of the 1954 Act enabled the police to:

> "seize and detain for the purposes of proceedings under this Act any wild bird, whether alive or dead, or any egg or nest of a wild bird, or any weapon or other article capable of being used to kill or take wild birds, which may be in that person's possession."

Section 19(1)(d) of the 1981 Act contains similar provisions for offences committed under that Act.

No records of court confiscations are kept centrally.

### Migratory Geese

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the killing of migratory geese. [22346]

**Sir Paul Beresford:** All wild birds, including migratory species, in the UK are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 which enacts our statutory obligations under the EC birds directive. Those migratory geese—greylag, pink-footed and white-fronted—which are included on schedule 2 to the Act can be hunted outside the close season. Licences may be given for killing geese and other birds for the purposes specified in section 16 of the Act.

### Opencast Mining

**Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list, by name, the planning applications for opencast mining in the United Kingdom which have been refused by the local planning authorities and which have gone to appeal to the Planning Inspectorate in the last 10 years; how many have been successful and approved by the Planning Inspectorate; how many have been rejected by the Planning Inspectorate followed by the reversal of the decision by him; and how many have been successful and approved by the Planning Inspectorate but rejected by him. [22609]

**Sir Paul Beresford:** The provision of information on planning appeals is the responsibility of the Planning Inspectorate. I have asked its chief executive, Mr. Chris Shepley, to write to the hon. Member.

*Letter from C. J. Shepley to Mr. Gerry Steinberg, dated 5 May 1995:*

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your Question about planning applications for opencast mining which have, on appeal, been decided by the Planning Inspectorate or the Secretary of State in the last 10 years.

Information on planning appeals decided before January 1988 is not available. Since then, 80 appeals involving opencast coal extraction have been determined—49 by Inspectors and 31 by the Secretary of State after exercising his power to recover jurisdiction of the appeals. 47 appeals were allowed (30 by Inspectors and 17 by the Secretary of State), and 33 were dismissed (19 by Inspectors and 14 by the Secretary of State). Details of these appeals are given in the enclosed tables.

Decisions taken by Inspectors are final, and the Secretary of State has no powers to overrule them. In respect of the appeals decided by the Secretary of State, his decision was not in accord with an Inspector's recommendation on only one occasion—that for the former Stagshaw Colliery, Corbridge, Northumberland (R2900/A/91/190575) which was dismissed on 18 February 1993.

As the tables are too long to be printed in the Official Report, arrangements will be made for a copy to be deposited in the Library.

### European Regional Development Funding

**Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the projects within the Greater London area that have received European regional development funding in each of the last three years. [22405]

**Sir Paul Beresford:** My Department's records are as follows:

| *Name of project* | *Borough* | *Amount paid* £ |
|---|---|---|
| *1992–93* | | |
| Kings Cross Technology Project | Camden | 23,000.00 |
| Central Hackney Computer Project | Hackney | 275,425.00 |
| North London Technopark | Haringey | 150,577.20 |
| Financial Services Sector Training | Islington | 21,282.50 |
| Interactive Multi-Media Workshop | Islington | 67,500.00 |
| Mobile Employment and Training Advice Project | Islington | 1,644.50 |
| WELLSTEC Training Centre | Islington | 64,441.00 |
| Angell Town Enterprise Centre and Workshop Units | Lambeth | 456,220.00 |
| Atlantic Road, Brixton | Lambeth | 135,734.50 |
| Milton Court Childcare Centre | Lewisham | 57,000.00 |
| Pepys Community Enterprise Units | Lewisham | 152,443.50 |
| CADCAM (computer aided design/computer aided manufacturing) Centre | Southwark | 421,142.50 |
| Bethnal Green Training Centre | Tower Hamlets | 242,000.00 |
| St. Marys Ward West | Tower Hamlets | 247,500.00 |
| Total grant paid in 1992–193 from European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) for projects within Greater London | | 2,315,910.70 |
| *1993–94* | | |
| Miller's House Housemill | Newham | 15,533.50 |
| *1994–95* | | |
| KONVER (a Community Initiative assisting regions heavily dependent on the defence sector) | Greenwich | 76,717.00 |

### Birds of Prey

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many licences were granted for the taking of birds of prey from the wild; and how many birds of prey were taken under such licences, by species, in each year since 1982; [22361]

(2) how many falconry licences were issued in each year since 1982, broken down by the categories and numbers of prey species involved; and if figures are collected by the Department in respect of the numbers of prey taken. [22362]

**Sir Paul Beresford:** Details of licences issued under section 16 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 are contained in the reports by the United Kingdom to the European Community on derogations under article 9 of the directive on the conservation of wild birds, 79/409/EEC. Copies of the derogation report are held in the Library. Figures are not available for 1982, 1983 or 1994.

### Accounting Officers

**Mr. Meacher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment how many times in the last 10 years, and on what dates, his departmental accounting officer has issue a minute in that role; and what was the issue in each case. [22566]

**Sir Paul Beresford:** Where a Minister overrules an accounting officer's advice on an issue of propriety or regularity or one of value for money the accounting officer should request a written instruction from the Minister to take the action in question.

I am not aware that any such instruction has been issued to the accounting officer of my Department during the period in question.

All such instructions are reported to the Comptroller and Auditor General who, after making whatever investigations he considers appropriate, will report his findings to the Public Accounts Committee.

### Opencasting, Tinsley

**Mr. Betts:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he or any of his Ministers gave approval to the agreement between Sheffield development corporation and Budge which split responsibility for the provision of the infrastructure for an airport at Tinsley, Sheffield, and the opencasting of the Tinsley site; [22705]

(2) if he will undertake a public inquiry into the agreement between Sheffield development corporation and Budge, in relation to the profit accruing to RJB Mining from opencasting at Tinsley, Sheffield, and the liquidation of A. F. Budge and the effect on the infrastructure for an airport; [22711]

(3) what involvement and knowledge he and his Department had about the agreement reached between Sheffield development corporation and Budge which divided responsibility for providing the infrastructure for an airport at Tinsley, Sheffield, and the authority for operating the site. [22713]

**Sir Paul Beresford:** There was never a joint agreement covering coal extraction and the construction of an airport at Tinsley. Coal extraction was subject to an agreement between A. F. Budge (Mining) Ltd. and British Coal Opencast and operated from 1989.

In 1990, Ministers in my Department gave approval to the sale of land by Sheffield development corporation to A. F. Budge (Mining) Ltd. for the construction of an airport under a development agreement with the corporation.

Ministers were not involved in the later transfer of this agreement from A. F. Budge (Mining) Ltd. to Sheffield Airport Ltd. a subsidiary of the A. F. Budge parent group. Sheffield development corporation informed my Department of the proposed transfer but no further approval was necessary from my Department as the parent company guarantee was to remain in place.

We have no plans for a public inquiry.

### Housing Association Tenants

**Mr. Burden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many tenants of housing associations in the west midlands have brought their homes for each year since 1979 under *(a)* right-to-buy legislation, *(b)* shared ownership schemes or *(c)* voluntary sales by housing associations. [22760]

**Mr. Robert B. Jones:** The table below shows the numbers of tenants of housing associations in the west midlands who have bought their homes since 1989–90 under right-to-buy legislation and voluntary sales by housing associations; and the numbers of people purchasing properties under shared ownership schemes. Figures before 1989–90 are not available.

| | *Right to buy* | *Shared ownership schemes* | *Voluntary sales* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1979–80—1988–89 | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| 1989–90 | 5 | — | 2 |
| 1990–91 | 35 | — | 5 |
| 1991–92 | 229 | 9 | 23 |
| 1992–93 | 133 | 2 | 38 |
| 1993–94 | 132 | 7 | 29 |
| 1994–95 | 143 | 4 | 41 |

**Mr. Burden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many housing association tenants have taken up the tenants incentive scheme, or the previous home ownership for tenants of charitable housing associations scheme in the west midlands for each year since 1979. [22761]

**Mr. Robert B. Jones:** The table shows the number of housing association tenants in the west midlands who have taken up the home ownership for tenants of charitable housing associations scheme and the tenants incentive scheme since 1984–85, when the home ownership scheme began.

| | *Home ownership for tenants of charitable housing associations* | *Tenants incentive scheme* |
|---|---|---|
| 1984–85 | 8 | — |
| 1985–86 | 64 | — |
| 1986–87 | 33 | — |
| 1987–88 | 45 | — |
| 1988–89 | 20 | — |
| 1989–90 | 156 | — |
| 1990–91 | — | 143 |
| 1991–92 | — | 276 |
| 1992–93 | — | 540 |
| 1993–94 | — | 853 |
| 1994–95 | — | 679 |

### Conflicts of Interest

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 1 May, column *24*, if he will make a statement on the possible conflicts of interest involving special advisers, listing the names of the individuals, the nature of the conflicts concerned and how the matters were resolved. [22904]

**Sir Paul Beresford:** In accordance with their appointment letters, special advisers have reported any possible conflicts of interest emerging during their periods of service to senior officials or Ministers, and have followed the advice they received about the action required to avoid actual conflicts emerging.

## Right-to-buy Scheme

**Lady Olga Maitland:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information is available on the right-to-buy scheme in London. [23316]

**Sir Paul Beresford:** The right-to-buy performance of London authorities has been monitored by my Department for a number of years. Annual monitoring is carried out of each authority's performance at the end of September, with poor performers submitting additional reports on a monthly basis. Data from the latest survey are given in the table.

I am pleased to report that data for September 1994 show that the number of tenants whose applications are being unduly delayed continues to decline. Across London as a whole delays beyond statutory deadlines have fallen by over 40 per cent., from 403 to 238. This compares with over 15,000 delayed cases in March 1989 when the Government's "tenants sanctions" procedures came into effect.

Only Hackney was monitored on a monthly basis in 1994. I am glad to say that Hackney's performance has continued to improve and I have recommended that monthly monitoring can now cease. To September 1994, over 185,000 dwellings have been sold under the right to buy schemes in London.

*RTB2 and S.125 delays monitoring September 1994*

| | *September 1994* | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *RTB2 delays* | *S125 delays* | *Total delays* | *September 1993 total delays* | *Change from September 1993–94* | *RTB sales in 1993–94* |
| City | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 24 |
| Barking | 0 | 2 | 2 | 10 | –8 | 424 |
| Barnet | 1 | 7 | 8 | 8 | 0 | [1]241 |
| Bexley | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | –2 | [1][3]355 |
| Brent | 2 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 3 | [1]218 |
| Bromley | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Camden | 4 | 14 | 18 | 3 | 15 | [1]361 |
| Croydon | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | –3 | 224 |
| Ealing | 7 | 5 | 12 | 4 | 8 | [1]332 |
| Enfield | 1 | 5 | 6 | 8 | –2 | 185 |
| Greenwich | 2 | 1 | 3 | 17 | –14 | 415 |
| Hackney | 5 | 0 | 5 | 51 | –46 | [1]300 |
| Hammersmith | 3 | 4 | 7 | 0 | 7 | [1]97 |
| Haringey | 1 | 15 | 16 | 18 | –2 | [1]307 |
| Harrow | 3 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 144 |
| Havering | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | [1]196 |
| Hillingdon | 0 | 3 | 3 | 16 | –13 | [3]594 |
| Hounslow | 2 | 6 | 8 | 40 | –32 | [1]219 |
| Islington | 12 | 31 | 43 | 118 | –75 | [1]308 |
| Kensington | n/a | 0 | 0 | 6 | –6 | [1]153 |
| Kingston | 0 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 4 | 89 |
| Lambeth | 5 | 4 | 9 | 8 | 1 | 249 |
| Lewisham | 15 | 7 | 22 | 19 | 3 | 400 |
| Merton | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 127 |
| Newham | 5 | 10 | 15 | 12 | 3 | [3]340 |
| Redbridge | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | [2]207 |
| Richmond | 4 | 5 | 9 | 6 | 3 | 144 |
| Southwark | 8 | 12 | 20 | 22 | –2 | [4]582 |
| Sutton | 0 | 6 | 6 | 12 | –6 | 105 |
| Tower Hamlets | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | [5]508 |
| Waltham Forest | 0 | 13 | 13 | 15 | –2 | 120 |
| Wandsworth | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | [1]389 |
| Westminster | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | [1]295 |
| Total | 80 | 158 | 238 | 403 | –165 | 8,652 |
| London average | 2 | 5 | 7 | 12 | –5 | 262 |

*Notes:*
[1] Incomplete date for 1993—94—available quarters data is grossed.
[2] Borough does not operate RTB but a similar scheme.
[3] No data for 1993–94 last available figures (1990–91) given.
[4] No data for 1993–94 last available figures (1991–92) given.
[5] No data for 1993–94 last available figures (1992–93) given.

## Objective 1 Programme

**Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much objective 1 money for Merseyside the Government are holding in *(a)* the Consolidated Fund, and *(b)* in other accounts; to what extent such money is yet allocated for projects, and if he will make a statement. [23162]

**Sir Paul Beresford:** The Merseyside objective 1 programme was approved in July 1994 and since then the European Commission has transferred £55.283 million to Government. These resources are held not in the Consolidated Fund but in accounts operated by Departments until they are claimed by, and paid to, project sponsors.

To date, £23.704 million has been authorised for payment to project sponsors. The balance continues to be used in funding the £65.498 million of schemes already approved in the first round of project submissions. The speed at which the funds will be paid to project sponsors is overwhelmingly dependent on the speed at which they deliver their schemes.

### Radioactive Waste

**Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he is ready to announce the conclusion of the review of radioactive waste management policy. [23587]

**Mr. Gummer:** In May last year, I announced that my Department would be heading a review of radioactive waste management policy to be conducted in parallel with, but separately from, the nuclear review. Reappraisal of the policy was necessary in view of the developments that had taken place in the 10 years since the Department published its strategy for the long-term management of radioactive waste. Our primary aim in conducting the review has been to ensure that radioactive waste, irrespective of whether it is produced by public sector or private sector operations, is managed in such a way as to ensure that people and the environment are not exposed to unacceptable risks either now or in the future.

The review's preliminary conclusions were published in a consultation paper last August. All the responses received have been carefully considered and the final conclusions of the review will be published in a White Paper this summer. In advance of that, I am ready to announce the conclusions that have been reached on two issues—the timing of UK Nirex Ltd.'s proposed repository for intermediate-level waste, ILW, and the Government's policy in respect of decommissioning nuclear plant. These matters are relevant to the conclusions of the nuclear review, which my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade is announcing today. There are also proposals in the nuclear review White Paper about the future structure of Nirex.

The Government continue to favour a policy of deep disposal rather than indefinite storage for ILW and consider it appropriate that Nirex should continue with its programme to identify a suitable site. The question had been raised of whether a delay of 50 years in construction of the repository might have advantages. However, the review concluded that the balance of argument was against any such delay. The Government therefore believe that the repository should be constructed as soon as reasonably practicable once a suitable site has been found, although the precise timetable will depend on the granting of planning consent and compliance with regulatory requirements, including the establishment of a sound safety case.

We are aware of the concern expressed by environmental groups and others and that the options available to future generations should not be foreclosed by irreversible action taken now. However, given the length of time needed to develop the repository and the period over which it will remain operational, action now to pursue deep disposal leaves options open until at least the latter half of the next century.

A planning inquiry is due to be held later this year into Nirex's application to construct a rock characterisation facility RCF, at Longlands farm near Sellafield to test further the geology and hydrogeology of the site. I have already outlined the matters about which I particularly wish to be informed to help me reach my decision on this case. These do not include the merits of national policy on the deep disposal of ILW. It has been established through the courts that while, of course, Government policy can be a material consideration that may be taken into account at a local planning inquiry, it may not be disputed and made a central area of debate. Policy on deep disposal of ILW has, in any case, already been the subject of wide consultation in the course of the review.

On the decommissioning of nuclear plant, the Government's view is that this should be undertaken as soon as it is reasonably practicable to do so, taking account of all relevant factors. The Government will in future ask all nuclear operators to draw up strategies for decommissioning their redundant plant. These will need to include justification of the timetables proposed and a demonstration of the adequacy of the financial provision being made to implement the strategies. As with all other operations on nuclear sites, decommissioning will be undertaken in accordance with conditions attached to the nuclear site licence by the nuclear installations inspectorate of the Health and Safety Executive in order to ensure the safety of the site, workers and the public. Disposal of wastes arising during decommissioning will be subject to regulation under the Radioactive Substances Act 1993 by the environment agencies which will replace Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and, in Scotland, Her Majesty's industrial pollution inspectorate.

The current decommissioning strategy for Magnox and AGR power stations involves three stages—defuelling immediately on shutdown, dismantling buildings external to the reactor shield five to 10 years later, and demolition of the reactor itself 100 years after shutdown. Given that regulatory approval for decommissioning is required on a case-by-case basis, the Government believe—as we said in the preliminary conclusions of the review—that it would be unwise at present for the operators of nuclear power stations to take steps which would foreclose technically or economically the option of completing the decommissioning process on an earlier timescale should that be required, and that they should recognise, when provisioning, the potential uncertainties regarding the timing of the second and third stages. Nevertheless, the Government confirm the preliminary conclusion of the review that there are a number of potentially feasible and acceptable decommissioning strategies for nuclear power stations available to the operator, including the safestore strategy proposed by Nuclear Electric and Scottish Nuclear. To ensure that operators' decommissioning strategies remain soundly based as circumstances change, they will be reviewed quinquennially by HSE, which will consult the environment agencies.

The Government recognise that, in addition to nuclear power stations, a variety of other nuclear facilities are in the process of being decommissioned, or are to be decommissioned in the future. As with power stations, decisions on decommissioning these facilities should be taken on a case-by-case basis and the same general principles apply in respect of timing. Proposals for dealing with such facilities will need to be included in the operators' decommissioning strategies.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

### Overtime

**David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list for each agency and the central Department for which he is responsible *(a)* the total hours of overtime worked for which payment has been made, *(b)* the total amount paid in overtime and *(c)* the total time in days and its monetary equivalent lost through sickness in each of the last three years. [19679]

**Sir John Wheeler:** The information requested is listed. However, the monetary value of days lost through sickness cannot be provided, as there are too many variables involved and it would be difficult to rely on the accuracy of any such calculation.

*1992–93*

| | *Total hours of overtime worked* | *Total amount paid in overtime £* | *Days lost through sickness* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Department* | | | |
| Education | 12,513 | 119,238 | 7,899 |
| Economic Development | 42,351 | 376,740 | n/a |
| Health and Social Services | 54,822 | 620,099 | n/a |
| Finance and Personnel | 77,900 | 814,130 | n/a |
| Northern Ireland Office | 1,564,319 | 15,126,206 | 99,933 |
| Environment[1] | n/ad | 2,323,104 | n/ad |
| Agriculture | | | |
| non-industrial | 127,609 | 1,626,541 | n/a |
| industrial | 148,173 | 905,598 | 16,715 |
| *Agency* | | | |
| Training and Employment Agency | 20,391 | 181,758 | n/a |
| Rate Collection Agency | n/a | 126,871 | n/ad |
| Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland | n/a | 18,111 | n/ad |
| Driver and Vehicle Testing Agency | n/a | 257,227 | n/ad |
| Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency | n/a | 75,975 | n/ad |
| Social Security Agency | 457,481 | 4,868,448 | 122,769 |
| Child Support Agency | n/es | n/es | n/es |
| Valuation and Lands Agency | n/es | n/es | n/es |

*Notes:*
1. Compensation Agency included in the Northern Ireland Office figures.
[1] Excludes Industrial Staff for whom information is not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.
n/a = Not available.
n/ad = Not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.
n/es = Not established.

*1993–94*

| | *Total hours of overtime worked* | *Total amount paid in overtime £* | *Days lost through sickness* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Department* | | | |
| Education | 14,492 | 146,650 | 8,794 |
| Economic Development | 38,879 | 338,530 | 12,664 |
| Health and Social Services | 37,953 | 453,858 | 14,605 |
| Finance and Personnel | 68,191 | 679,487 | 15,999 |
| Northern Ireland Office | 1,624,865 | 15,931,760 | 106,213 |
| Environment[1] | n/ad | 2,171,950 | 62,084 |
| Agriculture | | | |
| non-industrial | 105,868 | 1,347,460 | 38,496 |
| industrial | 130,931 | 835,767 | 19,751 |
| *Agency* | | | |
| Training and Employment Agency | 18,045 | 157,357 | 22,219 |
| Rate Collection Agency | n/ad | 146,339 | 4,371 |
| Ordnance Survey of NI | n/ad | 10,450 | 2,679 |
| Driver and Vehicle Testing Agency | n/ad | 287,938 | 2,572 |
| Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency | n/ad | 29,619 | 4,003 |
| Social Security Agency | 414,039 | 4,397,492 | 110,786 |
| Child Support Agency (NI) | 20,453 | 214,298 | 2,513 |
| Belfast Child Support Agency Centre (CSAC)[2] | 61,813 | 684,619 | 6,197 |
| Valuation and Lands Agency | 1,384 | 16,123 | n/ad |

*Notes:*
1. Compensation Agency included in the Northern Ireland Office figures.
[1] Excludes Industrial Staff for whom information is not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.
[2] Costs for Belfast Child Support Agency Centre are wholly re-imbursed by CSAC (GB).
n/ad = Not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

*1994–95*

| | *Total hours of overtime worked* | *Total amount paid in overtime £* | *Days lost through sickness* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Department* | | | |
| Education | 12,409 | 117,052 | 9,060 |
| Economic Development | 40,649 | 357,019 | 12,711 |
| Health and Social Services | 36,485 | 461,455 | 12,501 |
| Finance and Personnel | 80,419 | 800,372 | 12,442 |
| Northern Ireland Office | 1,601,193 | 16,868,091 | n/a |
| Environment[1] | n/ad | 2,324,292 | 57,035 |
| Agriculture | | | |
| non-industrial | 105,833 | 1,374,491 | 37,421 |
| industrial | 125,115 | 801,189 | 14,471 |
| *Agency* | | | |
| Training and Employment Agency | 14,656 | 128,947 | 21,705 |
| Rate Collection Agency | n/ad | 107,437 | 4,646 |
| Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland | n/ad | 9,541 | 2,928 |
| Driver and Vehicle Testing Agency | n/ad | 401,024 | 2,895 |
| Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency | n/ad | 67,730 | 4,258 |
| Social Security Agency | 409,197 | 4,475,962 | 125,313 |
| Child Support Agency (NI) | 29,262 | 293,664 | 3,700 |
| Belfast Child Support[2] Agency Centre (CSAC) | 82,284 | 939,126 | 10,894 |
| Valuation and Lands Agency | 1,642 | 16,570 | 3,002 |

*Notes:*
Compensation Agency included in the Northern Ireland Office figures.
[1] Excludes Industrial Staff for whom information is not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.
[2] Costs for Belfast CSAC are wholly re-imbursed by CSAC (GB).
n/a = Not available.
n/ad = Not readily available and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

### Social Need

**Mr. McGrady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, if he will list the plans in each Government Department for targeting social need, and if he will make a statement. [22109]

**Mr. Ancram:** Targeting social need is one of the Government's expenditure priorities in Northern Ireland and is an integral part of departmental policies and programmes. Departments seek to ensure that resources in all relevant programmes are targeted on areas of greatest need. The following specific measures have a particular TSN impact: the Department of Education skews financial resources to board areas and individual schools with highest social need. Current initiatives include measures to raise standards in under-achieving schools and projects under the "Making Belfast Work" programme and the Londonderry initiative.

The Department of the Environment takes account of targeting social need in resource planning for each functional area. Budget areas with the most direct impact on social need objectives are "Making Belfast Work", the Londonderry development office, the regional development office, housing and public transport.

The Department of Health and Social Services made targeting health and social need one of the priority themes in its regional strategy for health and personal services 1992–97. The strategy addresses inequalities in health status and social well-being in the Northern Ireland population.

The Department of Economic Development in 1994 commissioned a review of how the objectives of TSN relate to those of the Department. Following the review's recommendations for improvements to the existing mechanisms for monitoring progress in the targeting of resources, guidelines on the application of TSN are being drawn up. In addition, each agency is preparing a three-year action plan which will establish its current baseline, set out its proposals for action, and consider any need to adapt existing programmes or create new ones.

The Department of Finance and Personnel seeks to ensure that mainstream expenditure focuses resources on the most disadvantaged areas and people. TSN aims are consonant with the strategic objectives of the Northern Ireland single programming document 1994–1999 and are reinforced by many of its sub-programmes. Two specific targeting social need measures within the physical and social environment sub-programme aim to enhance employment opportunities in the most disadvantaged areas and to encourage the acquisition of educational and vocational qualifications.

The Department of Agriculture administers the rural development programme, which is targeted on areas of disadvantage.

The Northern Ireland Office applies TSN principles in funding crime prevention initiatives and the Probation Board's community development initiatives.

### Unemployment (Catholic Males)

**Mr. McGrady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans and strategies he will implement in order to reduce Catholic male unemployment in Northern Ireland. [22110]

**Mr. Ancram:** The Government are strengthening the Northern Ireland economy and reducing unemployment through increasingly successful efforts to attract inward investment, develop tourism, encourage exports and encourage higher innovation in Northern Ireland companies. Through the targeting social need initiative, the Government seek enhanced economic activity in disadvantaged areas.

In addition, the Training and Employment Agency has recently introduced in areas of greatest unemployment the new jobskills programme and pilot community work programmes are now in operation. Along with the existing action for community employment scheme, these provide high-quality training and additional work prospects for all those who are long-term unemployed.

### Punishment Beatings

**Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many punishment beatings have come to the attention of the Royal Ulster Constabulary since the ceasefire; which organisations are thought to have carried them out; and how many arrests have been made of instigators of punishment beatings in the current year. [23041]

**Sir John Wheeler:** Between 1 September 1994 and 30 April 1995, a total of 92 so-called punishment beatings took place, of which 35 were attributed to Loyalist and 57 to Republican groups; 80 of these have taken place since 13 October 1994.

Figures for the number of arrests which have been made of instigators of punishment beatings in the current year are not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

### Birds of Prey

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his estimate of the number and species of birds of prey poisoned in each year since 1987. [22366]

**Mr. Moss:** There is no information available to enable an estimate to be made of the number of birds of prey poisoned in each year since 1987. The number scientifically examined and found to have been poisoned is as follows:

| *Year* | *Number of birds poisoned* | *Species* |
|---|---|---|
| 1987 | 0 | — |
| 1988 | 0 | — |
| 1989 | 2 | 2 Buzzards |
| 1990 | 0 | — |
| 1991 | 1 | Red Kite |
| 1992 | 0 | — |
| 1993 | 1 | Peregrine Falcon |
| 1994 | 2 | 2 Buzzards |

### Housing Benefit

**Mr. Mallon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he will take to ensure that the upper limit of housing benefit entitlement may be waived in circumstances where it is more cost-effective for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive to pay higher benefit than to pay the costs of temporary accommodation for homeless or A1 families or individuals. [22354]

**Mr. Moss:** There is no upper limit on housing benefit entitlement.

The amount of housing benefit may be restricted where the Northern Ireland Housing Executive considers the dwelling is larger than is reasonably required by the householder and his family, or where the rent is considered unreasonably high compared with that for suitable alternative accommodation.

### Bed-and-breakfast Accommodation

**Mr. Mallon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give details of the current cost of bed-and-breakfast accommodation to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive for a family of two parents and seven children at 237 Kilkeel road, Annalong; and if he will give the equivalent full entitlement to a housing benefit for a similar family in four-bedroomed accommodation. [22355]

**Mr. Moss:** This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and I have asked the chairman to write with the details requested.

**Mr. Mallon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many individuals or families are currently in bed-and-breakfast or similar accommodation at the expense of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, in each region, pending rehousing from the homeless, or A1 housing waiting lists. [22356]

**Mr. Moss:** This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive; The chief executive has advised me that at 1 May 1995 the numbers with homeless or A1 status in temporary accommodation are as follows:

| *Region* | *Bed/breakfast accommodation* | *NIHE hostel* |
|---|---|---|
| Belfast | 67 | 60 |
| North East | 25 | 10 |
| South East | 34 | 33 |
| South | 7 | Nil |
| West | 92 | 30 |
| Total | 225 | 133 |

**Mr. Mallon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total cost of bed-and-breakfast or similar accommodation to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive in each region in each of the past three quarters, for the placement in temporary accommodation of homeless or A1 category families or individuals. [22357]

**Mr. Moss:** This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive but the chief executive has advised me that the information requested is not readily available for the last three quarters. However, for the year 1994–95, the total costs of temporary accommodation for households accepted as homeless and awarded 'A1' waiting list priority, households where investigations are not yet completed and households where an appeal against a homelessness decision is pending, are as follows:

| *Region* | *Bed/breakfast accommodation* £ | *NIHE hostel* £ |
|---|---|---|
| Belfast | 487,002.95 | 380,393 |
| North East | 192,242.04 | 53,870 |
| South East | 278,827.73 | 147,398 |
| South | 102,572.56 | 19,762 |
| West | 825,262.69 | 97,392 |
| Total | 1,885,907.97 | 698,815 |

**Mr. Mallon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the average weekly cost to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive in each region for housing homeless or A1 category families or individuals in temporary accommodation for *(a)* a single individual with

no dependants, *(b)* a couple with no dependants, *(c)* a couple with two children and *(d)* a couple with four children; and if he will give equivalent entitlements to full housing benefit for suitable accommodation. [22358]

**Mr. Moss:** This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, but the chief executive has advised me that the information is not available in the form requested and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

### Accounting Officers

**Mr. Meacher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many times in the last 10 years, and on which dates, his departmental accounting officer has issued a minute in that role; and what was the issue in each case. [22563]

**Sir John Wheeler:** Where a Minister overrules an accounting officer's advice on an issue or propriety or regularity or one of value for money the accounting officer should request a written instruction from the Minister to take the action in question.

No such instructions have been issued in the Northern Ireland Office and Northern Ireland Departments in the last 10 years.

### Education Authorities

**Mr. Beggs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the education authorities in Northern Ireland together with the total number of pupils for which each education authority was responsible in the year ended 31 March. [23317]

**Mr Ancram:** The education authorities in Northern Ireland are the five education and library boards which are responsible for the management of the controlled sector. The number of pupils for which each board was responsible in 1994–95 is as follows:

| *Area board* | *Pupils* |
|---|---|
| Belfast | 22,680 |
| Western | 18,843 |
| North-Eastern | 45,165 |
| South-Eastern | 40,107 |
| Southern | 27,994 |

### Telephones

**Mr. Donohoe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations his Department has made to the Department of Trade and Industry concerning the need for legislation to prevent the cloning of mobile telephones. [23476]

**Mr. Ancram:** None.

### Medium Secure Units

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list by regional health authority and by district health authority the current number of beds in medium secure units run by health authorities; what were the figures for each of the last four years; and if he will make a statement. [23507]

**Mr. Moss:** There are no medium secure units in Northern Ireland.

## EMPLOYMENT

### Labour Statistics

11. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his latest estimate of the number of women in work in Leeds, West *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time; and what percentage of the work force these figures constitute. [21626]

**Miss Widdecombe:** As the hon. Member will be aware, information for areas of this size is available only from the census of employment. Results of the latest census, for 1993, will be available in September 1995.

Results from the autumn 1994 labour force survey for west Yorkshire showed 222,000 women in full-time work and 195,000 in part-time work as employees or self-employed, equivalent to 23 per cent. and 21 per cent. respectively of the total.

12. **Mr. Gunnell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many changes have been made since 1979 to the categories of persons included as unemployed in the data issued by his Department; and if he will list those categories and the numbers eliminated or added at each change. [21627]

**Mr. Oppenheim:** There have been nine changes to the benefit system which have significantly affected the claimant count. In order to maintain consistency, we produce a series of figures taking account of these changes for comparison purposes. These changes do not, of course, affect the Department's other measure of unemployment, the labour force survey which is based on the International Labour Organisation standards.

15. **Mr. Spring:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the size of the work force currently in employment; and what was the equivalent figure a year ago. [21630]

**Mr. Oppenheim:** There were 25.6 million in the work force in employment in the United Kingdom in December 1994 compared with 25.4 million in December 1993.

### Long-term Unemployed People

13. **Mr. Legg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement about the Government's policies on helping long-term unemployed people to find jobs. [21628]

**Mr. Paice:** In April we introduced Jobmatch, job finder's grants, Workwise and 1-2-1, four new national programmes. In addition, we extended community action and expanded work trials. There are 240,000 places on these programmes alone.

### EC Employment Direction

14. **Sir Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what discussions he has had with his EU counterparts about future EC employment direction; and if he will make a statement. [21629]

**Mr. Portillo:** At every meeting of the Social Affairs Council, I have urged my fellow Employment Ministers to make job creation the first priority and not to pursue new labour market restrictions and regulations which can only destroy jobs.

### Spanish Employment Minister

16. **Mr. Jenkin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he last met the Spanish Employment Minister to discuss labour markets and competitiveness; and if he will make a statement. [21631]

**Mr. Portillo:** I last met the Spanish Minister of Labour at the end of March. We share the view that European countries need in their own ways to improve the performance of their labour markets, to increase competitiveness and achieve sustainable reductions in structural unemployment.

### Take-home Pay

17. **Mr. Congdon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what recent evidence he has to show how take-home pay in the United Kingdom compares with that in other EC countries. [21633]

**Mr. Oppenheim:** Independent research shows that British workers' average take-home pay is among the best in the European Union, better than France, Italy or Denmark and comparable with western Germany.

### Youth Unemployment

18. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he last met other EU employment ministers to discuss youth unemployment. [21635]

**Mr. Paice:** Employment matters feature regularly in the discussions that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has with ministerial counterparts. I am pleased to say that the rate of youth unemployment in the UK is well below the Community average.

25. **Mr. Hayes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of the effects of labour market regulation on levels of youth unemployment. [21642]

**Mr. Paice:** The Government believe that labour market regulation damages the level of employment, particularly for young people.

### Unemployment

19. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what measures the Government are taking to encourage unemployed people to try different jobs. [21636]

**Miss Widdecombe:** Employment Service advisers encourage unemployed people to apply for a wide range of vacancies. Last year, the ES placed 1.87 million people in work. The Government also provide 1.5 million opportunities to help unemployed people to improve their employability, job search activities and skills.

### Age Discrimination

20. **Mrs. Angela Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what the "Too Old, Who Says?" campaign aims to achieve; and what assessment he has made of how successful it has been. [21637]

**Miss Widdecombe:** The aim of the campaign is to counter age discrimination in the workplace. Through the "Too Old, Who Says?" booklet, supporting roadshows and media coverage, we offer help, advice and support to older people seeking work. It is too early to judge the success of the campaign which is still on-going. The initial response has been very encouraging.

23. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of whether the "Too Old, Who Says?" campaign is achieving its aims. [21640]

**Miss Widdecombe:** I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Erewash, (Mrs. Knight) earlier today.

### Unemployment, Ealing, Southall

21. **Mr. Khabra:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the rate of unemployment in the constituency of Ealing, Southall in 1979; and what is the latest figure calculated using the same methodology. [21638]

**Mr. Oppenheim:** Claimant unemployment rates are not available below the level of self-contained labour markets known as travel-to-work areas.

### Employment Select Committee Report

22. **Mr. Soley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his response to the proposals made in the first report of the Employment Select Committee, Session 1994–95, "Mothers in Employment". [21639]

**Miss Widdecombe:** We are considering the report and will respond to the Committee in due course.

### Wage Rates

26. **Ms Walley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many employees are being paid at a rate of £2.50 an hour or less. [21643]

**Mr. Oppenehim:** The results of the latest new earnings survey show that, for full-time and part-time employees in Great Britain whose pay was not affected by absence, some 17 per 1,000 earn £2.50 per hour or less.

### Careers Service

27. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what improvements are being made to the running of the careers service. [21645]

**Mr. Paice:** We have been establishing clear quality standards and making significant investment through contracts and competition, which give accountability with innovation.

### Stockport Training and Enterprise Council

**Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the cumulative total paid by Stockport training and enterprise council to the Damar Group of St. Petersgate, Stockport *(a)* in total since the TEC was established and *(b)* in each year. [21174]

**Mr. Paice:** Training and enterprise councils are private companies and the contracts they enter into are subject to commercial confidentiality. Accordingly, the information requested is not collected by the Department.

### Equal Opportunities

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment which Minister in his Department has responsibility for equal opportunities issues. [21460]

**Miss Widdecombe:** I have responsibility for sex equality issues, people with disabilities and older workers.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim), deals with race equality issues, while my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, South (Mr. Paice) is responsible for special needs training.

### Teesside TEC

**Dr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, what has been the expenditure of Teesside TEC on the East Cleveland training and employment group in each of the last 10 years. [21436]

**Mr. Paice** *[holding answer 1 May 1995]:* Training and enterprise councils are private companies and the contracts they enter into are subject to commercial confidentiality. Accordingly the information requested is not collected by the Department.

### Training for Work

**Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much his Department plans to spend on training for unemployed people living within the Greater London area in the present financial year. [22404]

**Mr. Paice:** The budget for training for work for unemployed adults for the London training and enterprise councils for the 1995–96 financial year is approximately £94.4 million.

### Graduate Unemployment

**Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the present level of graduate unemployment; what proportion of trainees on Government schemes move from their training into related areas of employment; and what forms of assistance are accorded to trainees to move from training into such employment. [22530]

**Mr. Paice:** The latest estimates from labour force survey for autumn 1994 show that 185,000 graduates of working are ILO unemployed.

There are a number of ways that the Government help to equip trainees for entry into the labour market. Training and enterprise councils are encouraged to give jobsearch help to trainees and training for work is now more jobs focused with payment being made for outcomes achieved. We are working towards a target of 50 per cent. of leavers going into jobs by 1997–98. Training enables young people to gain nationally recognised vocational qualifications and receive advice and guidance which equips them to compete in the labour market.

The tables show what proportion of trainees move from their training into related areas of employment:

*Percentage of those who trained in each occupational area and who got a job, where that job was in the same occupational area as their training*

| *TFW* *England and Wales* | *Per cent.* |
|---|---|
| *1993–94 leavers* | |
| Management or administration work | 27 |
| Professional work | 15 |
| Science or engineering work | 32 |
| Health associated work | 59 |
| Legal or business associated work | 2 |
| Literary or sport professional | 6 |

*Percentage of those who trained in each occupational area and who got a job, where that job was in the same occupational area as their training*

| *TFW* *England and Wales* | *Per cent.* |
|---|---|
| Clerical work | 27 |
| Secretarial work | 12 |
| Skilled construction work | 39 |
| Skilled Engineering/electronic work | 30 |
| Metal/welding work | 29 |
| Motor vehicle work | 29 |
| Textile work | 53 |
| Printing/woodworking/horticulture or craft work | 20 |
| Protective service occupation | 23 |
| Catering/waiting work | 39 |
| Health/childcare occupation | 42 |
| Hairdressing/personal Service work | 36 |
| Buyer/sales Representative work | 24 |
| Sales assistant/checkout operator/other sales occupation | 37 |
| Industrial/plant machine operating work | 19 |
| Transport operatives/drivers occupation | 47 |
| Agriculture/forestry/fishing | 11 |
| Other elementary/manual work | 30 |

*Source:* TFW Trainee database and follow-up survey.

*Percentage of those who trained in each occupational area and who got a job, where that job was in the same occupational area as their training*

| *Youth Training* *England and Wales* | *Per cent.* |
|---|---|
| *1993–94 leavers* | |
| Science and engineering professions | 12 |
| Sport/creative/artistic work | 15 |
| Secretarial work | 12 |
| Engineering work | 25 |
| Vehicle trades | 26 |
| Printing /woodworking work | 10 |
| Cooking/food preparation etc. | 35 |
| Security work/police/HM forces | n/a |
| Hairdressing/beautician work | 70 |
| Sales work | 20 |
| Industrial plant machine work and assembly | 11 |
| Nursing and medical technicians | n/a |
| Clerical work | 21 |
| Building/construction work | 26 |
| Metal forming, welding and related trades | 8 |
| Making textiles and clothing | 27 |
| Health and childcare work | 13 |
| Buying and sales reps | n/a |
| Transport workers and drivers | n/a |
| Farming, fishing or gardening work | 14 |
| Other elementary work | 23 |

*Source:* YT trainee database and follow-up survey.

### Training Provisions

**Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) how many places were provided by each TEC in *(a)* the current year, *(b)* the previous three years for (i) special needs trainees, (ii) those unemployed for 12 months or over and (iii) those unemployed for 24 months or over; [22994]

(2) what is the average length of stay for *(a)* men, *(b)* women, *(c)* each ethnic group and *(d)* special needs trainees on (i) youth training and (ii) training for work or employment training; and, for each programme, how many trainees and, what proportion have been in training for (1) more than 20 weeks, (2) between 20 and 52 weeks,

(3) more than 52 weeks but under 104 weeks and (4) over 104 weeks; and what were the corresponding figures in each of the last five years; [22993]

(3) how many people *(a)* applied for and *(b)* were in receipt of (i) enterprise allowance and (ii) business start-up allowance for each TEC area, in each region, and for Great Britain as a whole in each of the last five years; [22995]

(4) in each of the last three years, what has been the number of NVQs achieved, and at what levels, by entrants to *(a)* the YT programme and *(b)* the training for work programme for each TEC in (i) each region and (ii) the United Kingdom; [22952]

(5) how many *(a)* men, *(b)* women, *(c)* members of each ethnic group and *(d)* special needs trainees currently have places on (i) YT and (ii) training for work or ET for each TEC in (1) each region and (2) for each country of the United Kingdom; and what were the figures in each of the last five years; [22988]

(6) what is the average length of stay on *(a)* training for work and *(b)* YT programmes broken down by (i) gender, (ii) ethnic group and (iii) those with a disability or health problem for each TEC in (1) each region and (2) the United Kingdom. [22951]

**Mr. Paice:** As this information is contained in a number of tables, I will write to the hon. Member and place a copy of my reply in the Library.

### Employment Measures (Disabled People)

**Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what progress has been made since the introduction of special contracts arrangements to employ more people with a disability. [22702]

**Miss Widdecombe:** The special contracts arrangement was introduced on 29 November 1994 to help supported employment programme providers compete for contracts tendered by Government Departments and agencies.

Ninety-one workshops have now registered under the special contracts arrangement and the size of the supported employment programme has remained steady at around 21,000 severely disabled participants.

### Private Finance Initiative

**Mr. Simpson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of his Department's budget is allocated to initiatives which have been undertaken to secure private finance for his Department's projects. [22799]

**Miss Widdecombe:** Options for securing private finance are considered as a part of normal project arrangements in the Department. No specific element of the budget is set aside for this purpose.

### National Vocational Qualifications

**Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many, and what proportion of, vacancies advertised by his Department and by each of his Department's agencies in the last three years have listed the attainment of NVQs as an acceptable entry requirement; and, of those, how many have required *(a)* level 1 NVQs, *(b)* level 2 NVQs, *(c)* level 3 NVQs and *(d)* other level national vocational qualifications. [22990]

**Miss Widdecombe:** This information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

### Special Contracts

**Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment his Department has made of the success of the special contracts arrangements [22701]

**Miss Widdecombe:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Eastleigh (Mr. Chidgey) on 15 March 1995, *Official Report*, column *624*.

### Accounting Officers

**Mr. Meacher:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many times in the last 10 years, and on which dates his departmental accounting officer has issued a minute in that role; and what was the issue in each case. [22562]

**Miss Widdecombe:** I know of no such cases.

### Employment Services (Targets)

**Ms Harman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment on what basis he decided the target of 9.5 per cent. of initial claim inquiries made to the Employment Service not to be pursued as new claims, target No. 7 in the Employment Service's annual performance agreement for 1995–96; what factors have led to an increase in this target from the equivalent target in the annual performance agreement for 1994–95; and if he will make a statement. [23048]

**Miss Widdecombe:** The purpose of this target is to ensure that each client has been: informed of all the conditions necessary to qualify for unemployment benefit; referred to make a claim for the appropriate benefit and offered any suitable vacancies before attending a new claims interview. It is the client's decision whether or not to pursue a claim to benefit.

In deciding the target level for 1995–96, a number of factors have been taken into account. These include performance against the target during 1994–95 and the labour market and the operational context in which the Employment Service will be working in the coming year.

### Employment Service (Claims)

**Ms Harman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he will list *(a)* the total number of claims made to the Employment Service which were referred to adjudication, in each case giving the reason for referral to adjudication, *(b)* the total amount spent on adjudication services in the Employment Service and *(c)* the percentage of the Employment Service budget spent on adjudication services for each year since 1988; [23047]

(2) if he will list *(a)* the number of claims for unemployment related benefits made to the Employment Service which are referred to adjudication and *(b)* the percentage of those cases where the adjudication officer has decided in favour of the Employment Service's referral, in each case giving the reason for referral to adjudication for each year since 1988. [23049]

**Miss Widdecombe:** Responsibility for the subject of the questions has been delegated to the Employment Service under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

*Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Ms Harriet Harman, dated 9 May 1995:*

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your questions about claims referred to adjudication, and about the cost of adjudication services in the Employment Service (ES).

Unfortunately information is not available in the form you have requested. We record the number of adjudication decisions and opinions given rather than the number of cases referred to adjudication. Decisions are recorded as allowed, disallowed, reviewed in the claimant's favour, reviewed adversely to the claimant, referred to the Social Security Appeal Tribunal for a decision, or not reviewed.

Information on the number of adjudication officer's decisions and opinions is contained in a published document entitled "Analysis of Adjudication Officers' Decisions". This provides information on all the main entitlement questions arising on claims. Copies of this document are held in the Library of the House. The latest available information relates to the quarter year to December 1994.

Approximately £25.2 million was spent on adjudication services in the ES during the year April 1994 to March 1995. This figure includes the cost of salaries, general administrative expenditure, and premises costs, and represents some 2.4% of the total ES Gross Running Costs Budget for the year. I am sorry that this information is not available for the earlier years. 1994/95 was the first year for which total adjudication costs have been calculated.

I hope this is helpful.

# Written Answers to Questions

*Wednesday 10 May 1995*

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

### Daya Bay Nuclear Plant

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has received as to the reason for the indefinite shutdown of the Daya bay nuclear plant close to Hong Kong. [19320]

**Mr. Goodlad:** The Daya bay nuclear power station is in China some 50 km away from the urban area of Hong Kong. It is operated by Chinese companies. The Hong Kong Government have no involvement in its day-to-day operation, but are being kept informed of developments.

### Iran Murder Trial

**Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what observers of Her Majesty's Government have arranged to be present at the trial of those accused of murdering the three Christian leaders in Iran; and what assessment the observers have made regarding the trial proceedings. [23065]

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** The European Union has agreed to send a presidency representative to attend the trial as an observer. The trial is in its early stages and it is too early to make an assessment of the proceedings.

### Thailand

**Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action Her Majesty's Government are taking to seek to put an end to Burmese military incursions against Karen refugee camps in Thailand. [23066]

**Mr. Goodlad:** Together with our EU partners we have made clear our concerns about the safety of the Karen people to the ruling military regime in Burma, the State Law and Order Restoration Council. We called in the Burmese ambassador on 17 February to reinforce an earlier EU demarche in Rangoon. On 10 March the EU issued a statement condemning the offensive against the Karen people and calling upon the SLORC to find a swift and peaceful solution to the ethnic minority problem in Burma.

We view with concern the recent attacks against refugee camps in Thailand and welcome the continuing commitment of the Thai Government to provide refuge for those seeking safety in their territory. We continue to monitor the evolution of the situation closely and are considering appropriate action in consultation with our EU partners.

### Kashmir

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what indications the European Union has received in respect of the date and organisation of elections in Kashmir; if the European Union has been invited to send observers to monitor any such elections; what measures the European Union is taking to assess on the ground the prospect of elections in Kashmir; what assessment *(a)* Her Majesty's Government and *(b)* the European Union has made of the elections; and if he will make a statement. [23095]

**Mr. Baldry:** The Indian Government have yet to make any official announcement of their intentions with respect to the date and organisation of elections in Kashmir. It follows that there has been no invitation to send observers, and we and our European partners are not in a position to assess the elections.

### Pakistan

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government have made to the Pakistan Government about the detention of Anwar Masih in Faisalabad; and if he will make a statement. [23098]

**Mr. Baldry:** We regularly make representations to the Pakistan Government about the treatment of Christians and other minorities. We recently joined our European partners in raising Anwar Masih's case with the Pakistan authorities.

### Landmines

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to ban the production, export and stockpiling of landmines; and if he will make a statement. [23099]

**Mr. David Davis:** We are actively pursuing through various fora further controls on the production, stockpiling, transfer and use of anti-personnel landmines. But such measures need to be realistic, and widely applied, if they are to be effective. A complete ban at this stage would not secure broad international support or be properly implemented.

### Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty

**Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy in respect of preambular paragraph L of the European Parliament's motion on the extension of the nuclear non-profileration treaty, adopted on 5 April. [22352]

**Mr. David Davis** *[holding answer 4 May 1995]:* We agree with the preambular paragraph.

### Nuclear Safety

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what position was taken by the British ambassador to the board of governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency in regard to the proposals under discussion of the programme 93 + 2 on safeguards, at the board of governors' meeting on 27 to 30 March, that greater access to sites by nuclear inspectors should be implemented. [22931]

**Mr. Ian Taylor:** I have been asked to reply.

The United Kingdom supports the need to strengthen the IAEA's safeguards system. The general outline of the proposals were presented in the March meeting of the board of governors. More specific proposals will be presented and discussed at subsequent meetings.

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals in regard to technical, legal and financial implications of a strengthened nuclear safeguards system will be put forward by the United Kingdom at the next board of governors' meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency in June. [22930]

**Mr. Ian Taylor:** I have been asked to reply.

The IAEA will submit proposals for strengthening the safeguards system at the meeting of its board of governors in June.

## SCOTLAND

### Wigtown District Council

**Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consultation of tenants has been carried out by Wigtown district council regarding the future tenure of their houses; what options were put to the tenants; what advice was given by the council to tenants; and if he will make a statement. [22430]

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** I understand that Wigtown district council has been informally consulting tenants by means of newsletters and public meetings for several months about its proposal to transfer its entire stock of housing to the locally based Wigtown housing association. The statutory consultation procedures began late in April when the council issued a formal consultation document to tenants setting out the details of its proposals and the likely consequences of the transfer. Tenants have also been given access to independent advisers to assist them to reach an informed view on the proposals.

**Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much has been budgeted by Wigtown district council to conduct a ballot on the disposal of its houses to the Wigtown housing association; whether the council has received section 25 consent for expenditure already incurred; and if he will make a statement. [22429]

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** The cost of any ballot of its tenants is a matter for Wigtown district council. The Secretary of State is currently considering an application from the council for consent under section 25 of the Local Government Act 1988 to enable the council to make a loan to assist the newly formed Wigtown housing association with its setting up costs.

**Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what conditions he has imposed upon Wigtown district council regarding the procedures, majority required and advice to tenants before any ballot result of council tenants regarding transfer of ownership is given his approval. [22431]

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton:** Wigtown district council is aware that it must act in accordance with the provisions contained in schedule 6A of the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 in consulting tenants on the disposal of any of its housing stock. The council is also aware that the Secretary of State cannot consent to any such transfer if it appears to him that a majority of tenants do not wish the disposal to proceed.

It is for the council to decide how best to determine the extent of tenant's support for its proposals and I understand that it plans to ballot all tenants on the subject. The Secretary of State will have regard to the outcome of that ballot in determining whether to grant his consent to any stock disposal.

### Special Protection Areas

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list those sites which *(a)* have been designated or *(b)* meet the criteria for designation as (i) special protection areas under the European Community directive on the conservation of wild birds or (ii) Ramsar sites under the convention of wetlands of international importance. [22369]

**Sir Hector Monro:** The information is set out in the tables. Sites are designated by my right hon. Friend on the advice of Scottish Natural Heritage. The lists of sites at *(b)*(i) and (ii) contain those which in the opinion of Scottish Natural Heritage qualify by designation.

*(a)(i) Sites Designated under the European Community Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds*

| *Site* | *Location* |
|---|---|
| Flannan Isles | Western Isles |
| St. Kilda | |
| Shiant Isles | |
| Monarch Island | |
| Loch Druidibeg/Loch a' Machair | |
| Mingulay and Berneray | |
| Handa | Highland |
| Priest Island | |
| Rhum | |
| Loch Maree | |
| Loch Eye | |
| Abernethy Forest | |
| Loch Vaa | |
| Hermaness and Saxa Vord, Unst | Shetland |
| Fetlar | |
| Fair Isle | |
| Marwick Head | Orkney |
| Copinsay | |
| Sule Skerry and Stack | |
| Loch Spynie | Grampian |
| Loch of Skene | |
| Fowlsheugh | |
| Glen Tanar | |
| Coll | Strathclyde |
| Treshnish Isles | |
| Gruinart Flats, Islay | |
| Bridgend Flats, Islay | |
| Laggan Peninsula Islay | |
| Eilean na Muice Duibhe, Islay | |
| Glac na Criche, Islay | |
| Feur Lochain, Islay | |
| Ailsa Craig | |
| Loch Ken and Dee Marshes | Dumfries and Galloway |
| Upper Solway Flats and Marshes | |
| Montrose Basin | Tayside |
| South Tayside Goose Roosths | |
| Loch of Kinnordy | |
| Loch of Lintrathen | |

*(a)(i) Sites Designated under the European Community Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds*

| *Site* | *Location* |
|---|---|
| Cameron Reservoir | Fife |
| Forth Islands | Lothian |
| Gladhouse Reservoir | |
| Fala Flow | |
| Hoselaw Loch | Borders |

*(a)(ii) Ramsar sites designated under the convention on wetlands of international importance.*

| *Site* | *Location* |
|---|---|
| Loch An Duin | Western Isles |
| Loch Druidibeg, Loch a'Machair and Loch Stilligary | |
| Claish Moss | Highland |
| Loch Maree | |
| Loch Eye | |
| Loch Spynie | Grampian |
| Cairngorm Lochs | |
| Loch of Skene | |
| Coll | Strathclyde |
| Gruinart Flats, Islay | |
| Bridgend Flats, Islay | |
| Eilean na Muice Duibhe, Islay | |
| Glac na Criche, Islay | |
| Feur Lochain, Islay | |
| Loch Ken and Dee Marshes | Dumfries and Galloway |
| Upper Solway Flats and Marshes | |
| Silver Flowe | |
| Rannoch Moor | Tayside |
| Montrose Basin | |
| South Tayside Goose Roosts | |
| Loch of Kinnordy | |
| Loch of Lintrathen | |
| Loch Leven | |
| Cameron Reservoir | Fife |
| Gladhouse Reservoir | Lothian |
| Fala Flow | |
| Loch Lomond | Central |
| Hoselaw Loch | Borders |

*(b)(i) Sites which in the opinion of Scottish Natural Heritage qualify for designation under the European Community Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds*

| *Site* | *Location* |
|---|---|
| North Rona and Sula Sgeir | Western Isles |
| West Sound of Harris | |
| South Uist Machair and Lochs | |
| West Sound of Barra | |
| Balranald | |
| Baleshare and Kirkibost | |
| Loch Scadavay | |
| Lewis Peatlands | |
| North Harris Mountains | |
| Pentland Firth Islands | Highland |
| The Peatlands | |

*(b)(i) Sites which in the opinion of Scottish Natural Heritage qualify for designation under the European Community Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds*

| *Site* | *Location* |
|---|---|
| Caithness Lochs | |
| Caithness Cliffs | |
| Cape Wrath | |
| Inverpolly, Loch Urigill and Nearby Lochs | |
| Loch Ruthven and Nearby Lochs | |
| Central Highland Hills and Glens | |
| Assynt Lochs | |
| Loch Stack, Loch Nam Brac and Nearby Lochs | |
| Loch Shin and Nearby Lochs | |
| Moray Basin Firths and Bays | |
| Beinn Dearg | |
| Ben Wyvis | |
| Glengarry Lochs | |
| Loch Tarff and Nearby Lochs | |
| North Inverness Lochs | |
| River Spey-Insh Marshes | |
| Cairngorms | |
| Drumochter Hills | |
| Monadhliath | |
| Alvie | |
| Ben Alder | |
| Kinveachy | |
| Creag Meagaidh | |
| Ramna Stacks and Gruney | Shetland |
| North Roe and Tingon, Mainland Shetland | |
| Papa Stour | |
| Foula | |
| Noss | |
| Sumburgh Head | |
| Croussa Field and the Heogs | |
| Mousa | |
| Lochs of Spiggie and Brow | |
| Blackpark and Gutcher, Yell | |
| Moorland Areas, Central Shetland | |
| West Burrafirth, Shetland | |
| Hill of Colvadale and Sobul | |
| West Westray | Orkney |
| Papa Westray (North Hill and Holm) | |
| Lochs of Harray and Stenness | |
| Hoy | |
| West Mainland Moors | |
| North Mainland Coast | |
| South Westray Coast | |
| East Sanday | |
| Rousay | |
| North Ronaldsay Coast | |
| Southeastern Stronsay | |
| Eday | |
| Mill Dam, Shapinsay | |
| Orphir and Stenness Hills | |
| Keelylang | |
| Loch of Isbister | |
| Loch of Strathbeg | Grampian |
| Ythan Estuary, Sands of Forvie and Meikle Lochs | |
| Troup, Pennan and Lion Heads | |
| St. Cyrus | |
| Buchan Ness to Collieston Coast | |
| Rosehearty to Fraserburgh Coast | |
| Loch Oire | |
| Muir of Dinnet | |
| An Socach-Carn a Gheoidh | |
| Rhinns of Islay | Strathclyde |
| Islay: the Oa | |

*(b)(i) Sites which in the opinion of Scottish Natural Heritage qualify for designation under the European Community Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds*

| *Site* | *Location* |
|---|---|
| Inner Clyde Estuary | |
| Rhunahaorine Point | |
| Machrihanish and Tangy Loch | |
| North Colonsay and Western Cliffs | |
| Sanda | |
| Lochinch and Torrs Warren | Dumfries and Galloway |
| Wigtown Bay | |
| Castle Loch, Lochmaben | |
| Caenlochan | Tayside |
| Tay-Isla Valley | |
| Loch Leven | |
| Firth of Tay | |
| Eden Estuary, Tentsmuir Point and Abertay Sands | Fife |
| Firth of Forth | Lothian |
| Loch Lomond | Central |
| Flanders Moss and Lake of Menteith | |
| Westwater | Borders |
| St. Abb's Head to Fast Castle | |
| Greenlaw Moor and Hule Moss | |

*(b)(ii) Sites which in the opinion of Scottish Natural Heritage qualify for designation under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance*

| *Site* | *Location* |
|---|---|
| West Sound of Harris | Western Isles |
| South Uist Machair and Lochs | |
| West Sound of Barra | |
| Balranald | |
| Baleshare and Kirkibost | |
| Lewis Peatlands | |
| The Peatlands | Highland |
| Caithness Lochs | |
| Durness Lochs and Streams | |
| Loch Morar | |
| Kentra Moss | |
| Inverpolly, Loch Urgill and Nearby Lochs | |
| Assynt Lochs | |
| Moray Basin Forths and Bays | |
| River Spey—Insh Marshes | |
| Hermaness and Saxa Vord, Unst | Shetland |
| North Roe and Tingon, Mainland | |
| Shetland | |
| Foula | |
| Lochs of Spiggie and Brow | |
| Lochs of Harray and Stenness | Orkney |
| North Mainland Coast | |
| South Westray Coast | |
| East Sanday | |
| Mill Dam, Shapinsay | |
| North Ronaldsay Coast | |
| Southeastern Stronsay | |
| Loch of Strathbeg | Grampian |
| Ythan Estuary, Sands of Forvie and Meikle Lochs | |
| Rosehearty to Fraserburgh Coast | |
| Muir of Dinnet | |

*(b)(ii) Sites which in the opinion of Scottish Natural Heritage qualify for designation under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance*

| *Site* | *Location* |
|---|---|
| Rhinns of Islay | Strathclyde |
| Inner Clyde Estuary | |
| Machrihanish and Tangy Loch | |
| Lochinch and Torrs Warren | Dumfries and Galloway |
| Wigtown Bay | |
| Castle Loch, Lochmaben | |
| Tay-Isla Valley | Tayside |
| Firth of Tay | |
| Eden Estuary, Tentsmuir Point and Abertay Sands | Fife |
| Firth of Forth | Lothian |
| Flanders Moss and Lake of Menteith | Central |
| Westwater | Borders |
| Moorfoot Hills | |
| Greenlaw Moor and Hule Moss | |

*Note:*
Some larger sites are located within more than one local authority area.

## Red Deer

**Mr. Gallie:** Top ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what conclusions he has reached on the proposals for amendment to deer legislation in Scotland submitted to him by the Red Deer Commission. [23851]

**Sir Hector Monro:** We have given careful consideration to the Red Deer Commission's proposals and my Department has consulted organisations with a particular interest in deer matters in Scotland. In the light of the responses to this consultation, we have decided on the following proposals for deer legislation:

a. amendments to the general functions of the Red Deer Commission to include reference to furthering the "sustainable management" of all species of wild deer in Scotland. The title of the Red Deer Commission to change to "Deer Commission for Scotland";

b. the introduction of new arrangements for the appointment of members to the commission by the Secretary of State to provide for greater flexibility together with a permissive power to allow the Secretary of State to pay remuneration to members if, at some time in the future, he should think this appropriate;

c. amendments to the existing powers of the commission to appoint local panels;

d. an extension of the commission's existing powers to provide advice and a new power to support demonstration and experimentation projects;

e. amendments to the powers of the commission to deal with damage caused by deer and, in particular, the introduction of new powers to allow the commission to instigate control schemes when this is necessary to protect the natural heritage of Scotland or to safeguard public safety;

f. a new provision to allow for voluntary control schemes to facilitate co-operative action amongst adjoining landowners to control deer;

g. amendments to the provisions relating to close seasons for the shooting of deer to allow for these to be set by order;

h. an amendment to allow the commission to authorise the use of vehicles or aircraft to drive deer with the intention of carrying out essential culling work;

i. an updated definition of the types of agricultural land over which agricultural owners and occupiers can shoot deer, if necessary, to protect crops, pastures etc;

j. amendments to the provisions relating to marauding deer and out of season shooting to allow the commission to authorise shooting to prevent damage to the natural heritage and to unenclosed woodlands or to protect public safety;

k. amendments to the provisions relating to night shooting of deer so that all night shooting is subject to authorisation by the commission.

Our intention is to introduce the legislation along these lines when there is a suitable legislative opportunity.

These legislative proposals draw significantly on the ideas put forward by the Red Deer Commission and the Government would like to acknowledge its valuable help and assistance in this matter, together with all the other bodies who responded to the public debate. The proposals represent an important step forward in ensuring the sustainable management of wild deer populations in Scotland.

### National Galleries

**Mr. Gallie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the arrangements for the next policy and financial management review of the national galleries of Scotland. [23852]

**Sir Hector Monro:** Departments which sponsor non-departmental public bodies carry out regular policy and financial management reviews of individual bodies. The last such review of the national galleries of Scotland was undertaken in 1987 and a further review is now under way, to be completed by the end of July. As with all such reviews, the first stage will take the form of a "prior options" study, to examine the scope for discontinuing or undertaking in some other way some or all of the functions of the national galleries. Subject to the outcome of the first stage, the review will examine comprehensively, with regard to value for money, the main aims and objectives of the body, as well as its resource management and planning systems. The review will be conducted by Mr. Colin Imrie, a principal at the Scottish Office attached to the Scottish Office Education Department for this purpose. Comments from interested parties would be welcome and should be sent to Mr. Imrie at the following address by 30 June 1995:

The Scottish Office Education Department
Room 613
43 Jeffrey Street
Edinburgh
EH1 1DN

Tel: 0131 244 5360
Fax: 0131 244 5526

### Area Tourist Boards

**Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will list the names of people who are members of more than one of the existing area tourist boards; and what offices, they hold on these boards; [22572]

(2) if he will list the names of people who are members of a steering group for one of the new area tourist boards as well as being members of an existing tourist board for an area which is not included in the area covered by the steering group; [22573]

(3) if he will ensure that no-one will be a member of more than one area tourist board under the new system to be introduced in April 1996. [22574]

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton** *[holding answer 9 May 1995]:* Membership arrangements and office bearer appointments are the responsibility of area tourist boards themselves. The information requested is not held centrally. I understand that current practice is that bodies or individuals may be members of more than one board.

We are at present consulting on the terms of the statutory schemes which will establish the new boards. It is likely, however, that the requirements for membership will follow current practice.

Membership of the steering groups which have been established by local interests in advance of the appointment by my right hon. Friend of the first members of the controlling bodies of the new boards is entirely a matter for these interests to determine. My right hon. Friend will make his appointments on the basis of nominations from the existing area tourist boards and from local authorities. Nominations will be sought shortly.

## TREASURY

### Business Rate Assessment Appeals

**Mrs. Anne Campbell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many business rate assessment appeals have been *(a)* lodged and *(b)* dealt with in each year since 1989. [22786]

**Mr. Nelson:** The number of business rate appeals *(a)* lodged and *(b)* dealt with in England and Wales in the years since 1 January 1989 are shown in the table. During this period appeals were lodged and dealt with in respect of both the 1973 valuation lists and the 1990 non-domestic rating lists.

*Answer (a)*

| | *Number lodged* | |
|---|---|---|
| *Period* | *1973 Appeals* | *1990 Appeals* |
| 1.1.89 to 31.3.89 | 51,063 | n/a |
| 1.4.89 to 31.3.90 | 127,508 | n/a |
| 1.4.90 to 31.3.91 | n/a | 611,593 |
| 1.4.91 to 31.3.92 | n/a | 188,439 |
| 1.4.92 to 31.3.93 | n/a | 195,214 |
| 1.4.93 to 31.3.94 | n/a | 154,409 |
| 1.4.94 to 31.3.95 | n/a | 219,070 |
| Total | 178,571 | 1,368,725 |
| Grand total all appeals | | 1,547,296 |

*Answer (b)*

| | *Number dealt with* | |
|---|---|---|
| *Period* | *1973 Appeals* | *1990 Appeals* |
| 1.1.89 to 31.3.89 | 49,250 | n/a |
| 1.4.89 to 31.3.90 | 190,207 | n/a |
| 1.4.90 to 31.3.91 | 181,600 | 28,660 |
| 1.4.91 to 31.3.92 | 28,246 | 232,349 |
| 1.4.92 to 31.3.93 | 2,479 | 348,891 |
| 1.4.93 to 31.3.94 | 448 | 312,195 |
| 1.4.94 to 31.3.95 | 511 | 269,017 |
| Total | 452,741 | 1,191,112 |
| Grand total all appeals | | 1,643,853 |

**Mrs. Anne Campbell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many business rate assessment appeals lodged since 1 January 1989 are still waiting to be heard. [22785]

**Mr. Nelson:** Because of the way in which the statistics were obtained, it is not possible to identify the number of outstanding 1973 valuation list business rate appeals in England and Wales which were lodged in the period 1 January 1989 to 31 March 1990. Of the 1990 rating list business rate appeals received since 1 April 1990, a total of 283,096 were outstanding at 31 March 1995.

**Mrs. Anne Campbell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the average length of time that a business has to wait in order for the business rate assessment appeal to be heard. [22784]

**Mr. Nelson:** Statistics are not kept of the average time between the making of an appeal by a business ratepayer and a hearing. Valuation tribunals are, however, conscious of the need to deal with cases as quickly as is consistent with a full consideration of the merits of each case.

**Mrs. Anne Campbell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the effect of the reduction in Inland Revenue staff on the rate at which business rate assessment appeals are heard. [22787]

**Mr. Nelson:** Business rate appeals are dealt with by valuation officers of the Valuation Office Agency, an executive agency of the Inland Revenue. In the year 1994–95, a total of 269,528 appeals were settled. The target for 1995–96 published in the agency's business plan is to settle 330,000 appeals and sufficient resources will be made available to meet this target.

## Manufacturing Trade

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what was the deficit on trade in manufactures with the EEC countries for each year since 1992 and the annual rate in the three months from January 1995; and what has been the effect on output and employment to date; [23310]

(2) what was the change in the last 12 months in the volume of imports of manufactures from the EEC and the effect on output and employment to date in the United Kingdom; [23311]

(3) what has been *(a)* the change in volume of imports of manufactures from the EEC in the three months to January 1995 and *(b)* the effect on output and employment to date; [23307]

(4) what was the deficit on trade in manufactures with the non-EEC countries for each year since 1992 and the annual rate for the three months from January 1995; and what has been the effect on output and employment to date. [23309]

**Mr. Nelson:** Figures for EC and non-EC trade in manufactures and domestic output are available on the Central Statistical Office database, which can be accessed through the Library of the House. From these figures the direct contribution of changes in EC and non-EC trade volumes to GDP growth can be calculated. It is not possible to isolate the overall effects of trade performance on output and employment growth.

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the volume of *(a)* imports of finished manufactures from the EEC and *(b)* exports of finished manufactures to the EEC since 1992. [23308]

**Mr. Nelson:** The information is available from the CSO database which may be accessed by the House of Commons Library.

## Interest Rates

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 27 April, *Official Report*, column *646*, concerning the effect of the three increases in interest rates between 12 September 1994 and 2 February 1995 (1) what definition he attaches to the words (i) inflation and (ii) low; [23325]

(2) if the Government's objective of permanently low inflation excludes the possibility of a non-low rate of inflation generated by a high rate of growth in the leading sectors of the economy. [23324]

**Mr. Nelson:** The Government's objective is permanently low inflation. The aim is to keep underlying inflation as measured by the retail prices index, excluding mortgage interest payments—in the range 1 to 4 per cent. and bring it down in to the lower half of this range by the end of the present Parliament. Providing a stable macroeconomic environment with low inflation is the best way to ensure sustainable growth in all sectors of the economy.

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 27 April, *Official Report*, column *646*, concerning the effect of the increases in interest rates between 12 September 1994 and 2 February 1995, what has been the effect of each on the exchange rate. [23326]

**Mr. Nelson:** The exchange rate is determined by many factors. It is not possible to isolate the effect of changes in UK interest rates.

## Hotels (VAT)

**Mr. David Atkinson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his response to representations of the British tourist industry to bring VAT on hotel accommodation in line with European Union levels; and if he will make a statement. [22579]

**Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** There is no uniformity in the rate of VAT applied to hotel accommodation by the other EU member states. The Government have no plans to alter the standard rate of VAT applicable to hotel accommodation in the United Kingdom.

## Training

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what special training is given to persons who have responsibility for assessing the historical significant of documents held by his Department. [23276]

**Mr. Nelson:** Training in assessing the historical significance of departmental records is carried out under the guidance of the keeper of public records. It is provided in a number of different ways, including courses on the appraisal of records and conferences and seminars arranged by the Public Records Office.

Staff who deal with departmental records have experience of the work of the Treasury and receive on the job desk training together with guidance from of the public Records Office.

### National Vocational Qualifications

**Mr. Barron:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many and what proportion of vacancies advertised by his Department, and by each of his Department's agencies, in the last three years have listed the attainment of NVQs as an acceptable entry requirement; and, of those how many have required *(a)* level 1 NVQs, *(b)* level 2 NVQs, *(c)* level 3 NVQs, and *(d)* other level NVQs. [222971]

**Mr. Nelson:** HM Treasury and the Chancellor of the Exchequer's agencies are happy to consider national vocational qualifications at the appropriate level as alternatives to traditional educational qualifications of recruitment. None of the recruitment schemes over the past three years has specifically referred in advertisements to the acceptability of NVQs.

### Tobacco

**Mr. Barron:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to stop overseas mail order arrangements for selling through a personal agent operated by certain tobacco companies to avoid the payment of United Kingdom tax and duty. [22962]

**Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** A case of this kind is currently the subject of a judicial review application before the High Court. Customs and Excise consider that this scheme is a distance selling operation which should give rise to a charge of UK excise duty and VAT. The court is expected to give judgment later this month.

### Official Statistics

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how he proposes to ensure the success of the recently published Government official statistics code of practice regarding public access to official statistics through libraries and other public archives. [22610]

**Mr. Nelson:** Statisticians in all Government Departments act on the guidelines contained within the official statistics code of practice. A series of inter-departmental committees help to co-ordinate these activities and to share best practices. The Government statistical service dissemination committee covers public access issues and to this end has links with the committee of librarians and statisticians.

The central statistical office is strongly committed to increasing the availability of its statistics to schools, libraries and the academic world. Through its library extension and education programme it has a valuable programme of assistance including provision of information, advice and assistance. The CSO will also be co-operating with the British Library for the improved provision of archival material. The CSO also plans a public access library for its new Drummond Gate site in London.

### Single European Currency

**Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the effects on the United Kingdom's foreign, gold and other reserves, with particular reference to assignment and ownership in whole or in part of a decision on the part of the United Kingdom to join a single European currency. [21788]

**Mr. Nelson:** Article 105, paragraphs 2 and 3, of the treaty on European union and articles 30 and 31 of the statute of the European system of central banks and of the European central bank relate to the holding and management of foreign exchange reserves in stage 3 of economic and monetary union.

Under the United Kingdom's protocol to the treaty, these provisions will not apply to the United Kingdom if the United Kingdom does not move to stage 3.

### EU Funding

**Mr. Marlow:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer to what extent it is possible for a project to receive funds from both the EU social fund and the cohesion fund; and if he will make a statement. [22772]

**Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** *[holding answer 9 May 1995]:* It is possible for a project to receive funds from both the EU social fund and the cohesion fund, although no individual item of expenditure under the project may benefit from both. The combined assistance of the cohesion fund and other EU aid for a project must not exceed 90 per cent. of the total project expenditure. Only Ireland, Spain, Portugal and Greece are eligible for funding from the cohesion fund.

### Mortgage Protection

**Mr. Darling:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will set out his proposals to amend the law with regard to the taxation of payments made under mortgage protection policies; and if he will make a statement. [23158]

**Sir George Young** *[holding answer 9 May 1995]:* The Chancellor of the Exchequer's proposals concerning the taxation of benefits paid under mortgage protection insurance policies were set out in his statement of 2 May, a copy of which is available in the Members' Library.

## TRANSPORT

### Railway Privatisation

**Mr. Chidgey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport to what extent a private company taking over any of the functions formerly carried out by British Rail will be liable for industrial injury claims brought by employees who find themselves in the employment of a new railway contractor. [22313]

**Mr. Watts:** All of BR's rights, powers, duties and liabilities under or in connection with contracts of employment of persons employed by BR in an undertaking will transfer to a new railway contractor taking over that undertaking by virtue of the operation of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981.

New employers will therefore be liable for claims in respect of industrial injury. Any arrangements between new employers and BR about such liabilities must remain commercially confidential.

**Mr. Chidgey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport to what extent a private company taking over any of the functions formerly carried out by British Rail will be liable for industrial injury claims brought by retired employees of British Rail. [22314]

**Mr. Watts:** The Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 are not relevant to retired employees. I understand that BR's policy is to meet successful industrial injury claims brought by their retired employees.

**Mr. Chidgey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) to what extent the Department of Transport will be liable for industrial injury claims brought by retired British Rail employees following privatisation of British rail; [22315]

(2) to what extent the Department of Transport will be liable for industrial injury claims brought by former employees of British Rail who find themselves in the employment of a new railway contractor following the privatisation of British Rail. [22316]

**Mr. Watts:** The Secretary of State will not be so liable. He will make available to the British Railways Board each year an appropriate level of public expenditure cover and in so doing will have regard to the contractual and other obligations of the board.

### Gatwick Express

**Mr. Tim Renton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will now take the necessary steps to expedite the full process of privatising the Gatwick Express; and if he will make a statement. [23296]

**Mr. Watts:** The Franchising Director intends to issue invitations to tender for the Gatwick express franchise later this year.

### A23

**Mr. Tim Renton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will reconsider the criteria for paying compensation to those seriously affected by the widening of the A23 south of Pease Pottage. [23297]

**Mr. Watts:** New guidelines will be introduced for the discretionary purchase of off-line property, enjoyment of which will be seriously affected by a proposed trunk road widening scheme, which take into account loss of value of the property. There are no proposals to reconsider the arrangements for payment of compensation under part I of the Land Compensation Act 1973 for loss in value of property affected by a new or altered road which has been opened to traffic. If my hon. friend is aware of particular cases where there are difficulties, he may care to write to the chief executive of the Highways Agency, Lawrie Haynes, about these cases.

### Vehicle Inspectorate

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about funding for the vehicle inspectorate's programme of enforcement checks against lorries, buses and coaches. [23779]

**Mr. Norris:** I intend to make new funds of £350,000 available to the vehicle inspectorate in 1995–96 to increase its enforcement effort against heavy goods vehicles and public service vehicles. These funds, together with efficiency savings already achieved, will allow the recruitment of additional front line enforcement staff. The new funding further reinforces the Government's commitment to support effective enforcement against unsafe vehicles and underlines their determination not to compromise on safety. As the costs of VI enforcement activity are recovered through HGV and PSV operator licence fees, the Department has today issued a consultation document about a minor increase in HGV operator fees to make the income sufficient to cover these additional costs.

### Cars

**Mr. Gapes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to start a publicity campaign to discourage people from using their cars for shorter journeys. [23518]

**Mr. Norris:** The Government take opportunities in their advice to motorists to encourage them to walk or cycle or to use public transport where it is safe and reasonable to do so. I have no current plans for a wider campaign, although I am following with close attention the efforts of local authorities, including Hertfordshire and Hampshire, where transport awareness programmes are underway.

### South Eastern Railways

**Ms Bridget Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the passenger service requirement for South Eastern Railways will be published; and if he will make a statement. [23142]

**Mr. Watts:** The passenger service requirement for South Eastern will be developed and issued for consultation with local authorities and the rail users' consultative committees in accordance with the franchising director's timetable for franchising the line during or after 1996. The timetable is under continual review as the franchising programme progresses, and franchises may be brought forward.

**Ms Bridget Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the latest statistics for overcrowding on South Eastern suburban services. [23144]

**Mr. Watts:** The latest statistics on overcrowding for the South Eastern train operating unit are as follows:

| Date | [1]Passengers in excess of capacity Per cent. |
|---|---|
| Autumn 1993 | 2.1 |
| Autumn 1994 | 1.4 |

[1]Total percentage of passengers over the total capacity of the train including standing passengers.

Further improvement in train capacity will result from the continuing introduction of Networker rolling stock.

**Ms Bridget Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects South Eastern to be ready for franchising. [23143]

**Mr. Watts:** The franchising director's timetable is to franchise South Eastern during or after 1996. The timetable is under continual review as the franchising programme progresses, and franchises may be brought forward.

### Highways

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to require highway authorities to consult and secure the approval of residents of streets where it is proposed to remove stone or concrete flags and replace them with tarmac other than for reasons of safety. [22933]

**Mr. Norris:** No.

### Passenger Ships (Safety)

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what research his Department has done into the length of time needed to passenger evacuations of *(a)* ro-ro ferries and *(b)* other passenger ships; and what is his estimate of the length of time needed to evacuate a ro-ro ferry carrying 2,000 passengers. [22909]

**Mr. Norris** *[holding answer 9 May 1995]:* There has been no research funded by the Department of Transport on passenger evacuation times from passenger ships during the last 15 years, although research findings on the wider context of passenger and crew behaviour in emergency situations are currently being considered.

Current escape and life saving arrangements are designed so that passenger ships can be evacuated within 30 minutes, regardless of the number of passengers on board.

## EMPLOYMENT

### Industry Training Organisations

**Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the names and grades of the training, enterprise and education directorate staff that represent the Department at meetings of industry training organisations; and if he will make a statement on their role. [22999]

**Mr. Paice:** The names of the development managers who represent the Department at meetings of industry training organisations are shown in the list of ITOs produced by the National Council of Industry Training Organisations. A copy of the latest list is in the Library. Development managers communicate Government training policy to ITOs and manage projects under the standards, ITO support and modern apprenticeship programmes.

### Training

**Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the amount of funding per start available from his Department for *(a)* youth training and *(b)* training for work or employment training; and what it has been in each of the last five years. [23000]

**Mr. Paice:** This information is provided in the following table, each year's budget being divided by the number of starts achieved or anticipated.

| Year | Youth training (YT) £ | Training for work/employment training (TfW/ET) £ |
|---|---|---|
| 1995–96 (plans) | 4,533 | 2,569 |
| 1994–95 (provisional) | 3,697 | 2,473 |
| 1993–94 | 3,951 | 2,603 |
| 1992–93 | 3,526 | 2,588 |
| 1991–92 | 3,895 | 2,817 |
| 1990–91 | 3,387 | 2,990 |

*Notes:*
1. All figures are for England only except TfW and ET figures for 1991–92 and 1992–93 which take account of Employment Action in Scotland and Wales (1991–92) in Scotland (1992-93).
2. The figures for YT are cost per first time entrant.

**Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment for each industrial sector, what have been the amounts paid by his Department in each of the last 10 years to each *(a)* industry training organisations, *(b)* lead body and *(c)* awarding body where different organisations fill these roles; and for what purpose these amounts were paid. [22949]

**Mr. Paice:** The information is not available in the form requested and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. In 1994–95 approximately £20 million was spent by this Department on approximately 900 separate contracts with lead bodies and industry training organisations.

**Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will provide a breakdown of the £578 million allocated to training for work to show the amount planned for expenditure on *(a)* starts, *(b)* outcomes, *(c)* special needs, *(d)* fees to training and enterprise councils, *(e)* administrative costs, *(f)* payments of benefits, *(g)* pilots or other non-generalised funding and *(h)* the remaining amounts; if he will give the figures by TEC and region, and if he will provide a similar breakdown for youth training. [22986]

**Mr. Paice:** The budgets of individual training and enterprise councils are treated as commercial in confidence between the Department and TECs until the autumn, after TECs have completed negotiations with providers of training.

The following tables give regional allocations of training for work and youth training budgets for 1995–96.

On TfW the fees budget to TECs is split 25 per cent. for starts and 75 per cent. for outcomes. Starts payments are not made for YT except for certain pilot schemes. Outcome budgets on YT differ with individual TECs, but,

except for pilots, are up to a maximum of 40 per cent. of the total budget. Separate budgets are not dedicated for those with special needs on either programme. There are no specific budgets for administrative costs within these programmes, though TECs receive a management fee as a contribution to their administrative expenditure across all their activities.

*Training for work 1995–96*

| | *Fees budget £ million* | *Allowance budget £ million* |
|---|---|---|
| Central development | 4.4 | 0 |
| Others | 19.7 | 6.3 |
| South East | 23.3 | 24.3 |
| London | 47.4 | 47.0 |
| Eastern | 18.9 | 19.7 |
| South West | 23.6 | 24.6 |
| West Midlands | 29.2 | 30.4 |
| East Midlands | 19.2 | 20.0 |
| Yorks and Humberside | 32.6 | 33.9 |
| North West | 30.0 | 31.3 |
| Merseyside | 20.0 | 20.8 |
| North East | 25.0 | 26.0 |
| Total | 293.3 | 284.4 |

*Notes:*
1. The Allowance budget is paid through the Employment Service.
2. 'Others' covers funding for residential training centres, performance-related funding and for pit closure areas.

*Youth programmes 1995–96*

| | *Budget £ million* |
|---|---|
| Central development | 2.0 |
| Others | 23.0 |
| South East | 77.4 |
| London | 59.1 |
| Eastern | 63.4 |
| South West | 54.5 |
| West Midlands | 73.7 |
| East Midlands | 61.1 |
| Yorkshire and Humberside | 76.4 |
| North West | 102.8 |
| Merseyside | 32.0 |
| North East | 55.0 |
| Total | 680.4 |

*Notes:*
1. The budget covers fees and allowances for youth training, youth credits and modern apprenticeships.
2. 'Others'covers funding for bridging allowances, the Ministry of Defence and Department of Transport schemes, performance-related funding and performance pool.

### Business Start-up Allowance

**Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many representations he has received in the last year concerning business start-up allowance. [22997]

**Mr. Paice:** About 170 written representations were recorded in the 1994–95 year.

### Training and Enterprise Councils

**Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the amount allocated to each TEC *(a)* in each region and *(b)* in the United Kingdom for (i) training fees, (ii) starts funding and (iii) outcomes funding. [22985]

**Mr. Paice:** The budget of individual training and enterprise councils are treated as commercial in confidence between the Department and TECs until the autumn, after TECs have completed negotiations with providers of training.

### National Vocational Qualifications

**Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the target for NVQs and how many NVQs were achieved for each TEC in *(a)* each region and *(b)* the United Kingdom; at what level these were achieved in each year since their launch; and what are the targets for achievement this year and next year. [22950]

**Mr. Paice:** There are no targets for numbers of National Vocational Qualifications. The total number of NVQs awarded between their launch and 31 December 1994 is about 765,000 according to figures supplied by the National Council for Vocational Qualifications. Information for training and enterprise councils and regions is not available.

### Instruments of Torture Equipment

**Mr. Jim Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what support training and enterprise councils or his Department directly have given to manufactures of torture equipment. [22721]

**Mr. Paice:** The Employment Department does not collect information from training and enterprise councils which enables it to identify individual companies which receive TEC support.

The Department has not knowingly given support to manufactures of torture equipment.

### Labour Statistics

**Dr. John Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of 16 to 24 year-olds in West Cumbria is in full-time employment. [22735]

**Mr. Paice:** The information requested is not available for West Cumbria. However, estimates from the autumn 1994 labour force survey show that in the north region, excluding Tyne and Wear, 41 per cent. of 16 to 24-year-olds were in full-time employment.

**Mr. Byers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will state for each February since 1979 the number of males aged 50 to 65 years in full-time employment; and what percentage this is of the relevant population. [18084]

**Miss Widdecombe** *[holding answer 4 April 1995]:* The information requested is shown in the following table:

*Males aged 50 to 65 in full-time employment Great Britain 1979–1994*[1]

| *Spring* | *Numbers (000s)* | *Per cent.* |
|---|---|---|
| 1979 | 3,298 | 71 |
| 1981 | 2,882 | 62 |
| 1983 | 3,087 | 67 |
| 1984 | 3,016 | 65 |
| 1985 | 2,955 | 64 |
| 1986 | 2,859 | 62 |

*Males aged 50 to 65 in full-time employment Great Britain 1979–1994*[1]

| Spring | Numbers (000s) | Per cent. |
|---|---|---|
| 1987 | 2,773 | 61 |
| 1988 | 2,810 | 62 |
| 1989 | 2,833 | 63 |
| 1990 | 2,825 | 63 |
| 1991 | 2,752 | 62 |
| 1992 | 2,636 | 59 |
| 1993 | 2,538 | 56 |
| 1994 | 2,576 | 57 |

*Source:*
Labour Force Survey (LFS).
*Note:*
[1] Information not collected for 1980 or 1982.

The fall in the proportion of men aged 50 to 64 in full-time employment reflects several factors, including an increase in the numbers taking early retirement. The spring 1994 labour force survey showed that, of those who were economically inactive, three quarters said that they did not want a job.

## OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

### Concessional Aid Debt

**Miss Lestor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list by country the total stock of existing, estimated and outstanding concessional aid debt owed to the United Kingdom by developing countries for each year from 1990 to 2000. [22673]

**Mr. Baldry:** The information has been placed in the Libraries of the House.

### Afghan Refugees

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to instigate the discussions with representatives of the Pakistan Government, together with the United Kingdom's European partners, to assess the political, economic and social implications of Afghan refugees and displaced persons remaining in Pakistan; if he will make it his policy to undertake, with the United Kingdom's European partners, a comprehensive strategy designed to enable Afghans to return to their own country; and if he will make a statement. [23096]

**Mr. Baldry:** The status of Afghan refugees in Pakistan is regularly monitored by the world food programme and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the results discussed with the Pakistan Government and bilateral donors. A joint WFP/UNHCR/donors food assessment mission, including an EC representative, has just ended. It found that Afghan refugees in Pakistan enjoy a relatively good socio-economic and nutritional status. It expects that 200,000 refugees will return from Pakistan this year.

The mission's full report will form the basis of a conference organised by UNDP and Sweden in Stockholm on 1–2 June. The conference will discuss how to bring about the transition from humanitarian assistance to longer-term rehabilitation, reconstruction and development, necessary to enable Afghans to return to their own country.

### Pakistan Cotton Crop

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 2 May *Official Report*, column *141*, when the study funded by the Overseas Development Administration on cotton pest management, is expected to be completed; if he will list the preliminary conclusions of the study; and what evaluation he has made of reports from Natural Research Institute staff working in Pakistan. [23134]

**Mr. Baldry:** The study is expected to be completed by early July. Preliminary conclusions are not available. The study will cover all the factors affecting the cotton crop in Pakistan, and not only pest management.

ODA funded research carried out by the Natural Resources Institute is monitored by ODA's renewable natural resources research strategy monitoring panel. Reports of earlier phases of NRI's work in Pakistan, together with information from other sources, were the basis for the decision to focus its current research into cotton on the use of pheromones in controlling cotton pests, and on pesticide resistance. Pheromone research undertaken by NRI in Pakistan and Egypt is currently the subject of an ODA evaluation study.

### Caribbean Banana Industry

**Mr. Brandreth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what the United Kingdom is going to secure the long-term prospects of the Caribbean banana industry. [23928]

**Mr. Baldry:** The UK has assisted the Windward Islands banana industry over many years. We fought hard to safeguard their interests in the EC banana regime which allows preferential access for Windward Islands bananas to the EU market until 2002. We have recently funded a wide-ranging consultancy review of the industry's current structure and future strategy. The recommendations of this review have been broadly accepted by the Windwards Prime Minister and the industry. We are now co-operating with the EC on a second study which will provide detailed plans to enable the industry to become more competitive.

### Policy Objectives

**Mr. Brandreth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the progress report of the ODA's policy objectives described on page 65 of the 1995 departmental report (CM 2802) will be put into the public domain. [23929]

**Mr. Baldry:** The progress report has just been finalised, and copies have been placed in the Libraries of the House. Further copies are available from the ODA Library.

### Northern Iraq

**Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what monitoring was carried out of the expenditure of Overseas Development Administration assistance through Cornish-Kurdish Medical Aid and its temporary agent Mr. Stephen Crouch for a medical project in northern Iraq;

(2) if he will seek a report on the expenditure of the funds made available to Cornish-Kurdish Medical Aid for a medical project in northern Iraq.

**Mr. Baldry** *[holding answer 28 April 1995]:* In June 1991 ODA made a payment of £12,855 to Cornwall Kurdish Medical Aid. This reimbursed against detailed documentation the cost of medical supplies and personal effects for 17 volunteers provided by the non-governmental organisation as part of the 165-member ODA team in northern Iraq at that time.

**Miss Emma Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what monitoring was carried out of the expenditure of Overseas Development Administrator's assistance by the Kurdish Relief Organisation and its associate Mr. Stephen Crouch for a medical project in northern Iraq. [21707]

**Mr. Baldry** *[holding answer 28 April 1995]:* Physical monitoring of ODA assistance to Kurdish relief agencies in northern Iraq in 1991 and 1992 was carried out by visits from British embassy officials based in Ankara. In addition, the agencies submitted written reports to the ODA.

## LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

### Benzodiazepines

**Mr. Steen:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department when he expects to reply to the letters from the hon. Member for South Hams dated 31 March and 30 April about Benzodiazepine problems. [23421]

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** The Lord Chancellor is considering my hon. Friend's letters and a reply should be with him shortly.

### Crown Court Cases

**Mr. Straw:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what was the number of cases coming to trial at the Crown court; what was the number of acquittals; and what was the number of convictions for every year since 1987. [23626]

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** The question concerns a specific operational matter on which the chief executive of the Court Service is best placed to provide an answer and I have accordingly asked the chief executive to reply direct.

*Letter from Michael Huebner to Mr. Jack Straw, dated 9 May 1995:*

The Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, has asked me to reply to your Question about the number of cases coming to trial at the Crown Court during the past 8 years.

The following statistics show the number of cases coming to trial at the Crown Court each year since 1987:

1987: 28,006
1988: 26,820
1989: 26,830
1990: 26,177
1991: 27,608
1992: 27,113
1993: 25,583
1994: 27,627[1]

You also ask for information about the number of acquittals and convictions. I am only able to provide this in respect of defendants who entered pleas of not guilty to all counts, as follows:

| *Year* | *Acquitted* | *Convicted* |
|---|---|---|
| 1987 | 15,560 | 15,475 |
| 1988 | 17,542 | 14,507 |
| 1989 | 17,517 | 13,827 |
| 1990 | 17,241 | 12,752 |
| 1991 | 17,760 | 12,773 |
| 1992 | 15,576 | 12,274 |
| 1993 | 14,800 | 10,680 |
| 1994 | [1]15,700 | [1]10,500 |

[1] These figures are provisional and therefore liable to revision to take account of late amendments.

## WALES

### Equal Opportunities

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the gender assessment being prepared by his Department. [21472]

**Mr. Redwood:** Welsh Office policy, in line with guidance issued in 1992 by the ministerial group on women's issues, is that policy proposals should ensure that unlawful or unjustifiable sex or race discrimination does not occur and that similar principles apply to people with disabilities. Guidance on the appraisal and evaluation of policy for equal treatment has recently been reissued to everyone at higher executive officer level and above in the Welsh Office. This scrutiny is part of a continuous and routine process, as part of policy advice to Ministers.

### Animal Diseases

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many cases of Paramyxovirus occurred in each year since 1985. [22174]

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** The number of confirmed outbreaks of Paramyxovirus that have occurred each year in Wales since 1985 is as follows:

1985: 69
1986: 29
1987: 24
1988: 6
1989: 8
1990: 11
1991: 4
1992: 3
1993: 2
1994: 0

### Vacant Dwellings

**Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the number of empty council houses; and if he will make a statement. [22808]

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** Information on the number of vacant local authority dwellings in Wales is published annually in table 6.9 of Welsh Housing Statistics No. 14, 1994, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

### Employment (Over 40s)

**Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are his policies to ensure that the over-40s age group can find employment. [22809]

**Mr. Redwood:** The Government's policies are aimed at creating the right macro-economic and micro-economic conditions for success: low inflation; sound public finances; markets that work properly; and a minimal regulatory and tax burden on business. The recipe is promoting sustained economic growth and higher living standards, from which all age groups will benefit.

The Government is aware of the problems faced by older unemployed people and is keen to encourage employers to make full use of the skills and experience they have to offer. At the end of 1993, my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Employment launched the "Getting On" campaign, aimed at persuading employers to retain and recruit employees on the basis of ability rather than age.

However, it is never too late to learn a new skill and this is becoming an increasingly more significant part of people's working lives. "People and Prosperity—An Agenda for Action in Wales" stresses the importance of lifelong learning. It sets out the action that is needed to help adults gain information on, and access to, education and training opportunities.

### National Vocational Qualifications

**Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many, and what proportion of, vacancies advertised by his Department, and by each of his Department's agencies, in the last three years have listed the attainment of NVQs as an acceptable entry requirement; and, of those, how many have required (i) level 1 NVQs, (ii) level 2 NVQs, (iii) level 3 NVQs and (iv) other level NVQs. [22983]

**Mr. Redwood:** Except where professional or specialist qualifications are required, all vacancies are advertised as requiring appropriate academic and equivalent qualifications which include NVQs. Over the last three years there have been five recruitment competitions for posts for which NVQs would be appropriate qualifications: three at NVQ level 2, and one each at NVQ level 3 and 4.

### Local Government Reorganisation

**Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what initiatives he is taking to ensure that, consequent on the impending local government reorganisation, chief officers and their subordinate colleagues are not rendered unemployed; and if he will make a statement. [22811]

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** The new authorities are responsible for deciding their staffing structures, including the number and grade of posts. My right hon. Friend told the House on 14 December 1994 that he expected them to make the fullest possible use of existing staff—if necessary by redeploying and retraining them—rather than spending large sums of public money on redundancies and recruitment.

### Audit Commission Guidelines

**Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what guidelines he has issued to the Audit Commission with regard to district audit functions in Wales; and if he will make a statement in respect of the work of the Commission in Wales. [23076]

**Mr. Redwood:** The Audit Commission operates under a code of audit practice issued under section 14 of the Local Government finance Act 1982. The code is updated every five years and agreed by me and my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Environment and Health. The code prescribes the way in which auditors are to carry out their functions under part 111 of the 1982 Act and is currently under review.

### Designated Conservation Sites

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those sites which *(a)* have been designated or *(b)* meet the criteria for designation as (i) special protection areas under the European Community Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds or (ii) Ramsar sites under the Convention of Wetlands of International Importance. [22368]

**Mr. Gwilym Jones:** The list of designated sites in Wales is as follows:

*Special protection areas*
Skokholm and Skomer
Grassholm
Traeth Lafan, Conway Bay
Ynys Feurig, Cemlyn Bay and the Skerries
Glannau Aberdaron (Aberdaron Coast) and Ynys Enlli (Bardsey Island)
Glannau Ynys Gybi (Holy Island Coast)
Burry Inlet[1]
Dee Estuary[1 2]

*Ramsar sites*
Cors Fochno and Dyfi
Llyn Idwal
Llyn Tegid
Cors Caron
Crymlyn Bog
Burry Inlet[1]
Dee Estuary[1 2]

[1] Joint Special Protection Areas and Ramsar sites.
[2] Cross border site.

Additional sites are under review and a list will be published in due course.

### Child Abuse

**Sir Wyn Roberts:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he is able to announce details of the investigation to be undertaken by a QC into child abuse in children's homes in north Wales. [23849]

**Mr. Redwood:** I have today appointed Nicola Davies QC to advise me, in the light of her examination of relevant papers held by the various agencies concerned, whether an inquiry is required and if so, the form that it should take and the issues to be addressed. I intend to publish her recommendations and her reasons for them.

There may be some matters which for legal reasons it might not be possible to publish.

### Welsh Language

**Sir Wyn Roberts:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has for the future management of the Government's grants to support the Welsh language. [23850]

**Mr. Richards:** The Government are considering transferring responsibility for grant-aiding the four major Welsh language non-statutory organisations—the Welsh Books Council; the Welsh nursery schools movement, Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin; the National Eisteddfod; and the Welsh youth movement, Urdd Gobaith Cymru—from the Welsh Office to the Welsh Language Board. A consultative paper seeking the views of the four organisations and other interested parties is being issued today with comments invited by 7 July. A copy has been placed in the Libraries of the House.

### Conflicts of Interest

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 1 May, *Official Report*, column *119*, if he will make a statement on the possible conflicts of interest involving special advisers, listing the names of the individuals, the nature of the conflicts concerned and how the matters were resolved. [22905]

**Mr. Redwood** *[holding answer 9 May 1995]:* It is not my practice to comment on information about the private interests of staff.

## AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

### Appointments

**Mr. Ainger:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many civil service appointments were made to administrative assistant and administrative officer posts in his Department and the agencies for which he is accountable in each quarter from September 1993 until April 1995. [21780]

**Mr. Waldegrave** *[holding answer 1 May 1995]:* The information in respect of permanent and fixed term appointments to core—MAFF is as follows:

| | *AA* | *AO* |
|---|---|---|
| September—December 1993 | 49 | 27 |
| January–March 1994 | 16 | 36 |
| April–June 1994 | 31 | 11 |
| July–September 1994 | 3 | 20 |
| October–December 1994 | 21 | 50 |
| January–April 1995 | 25 | 24 |

I have asked agency chief executives to reply to the hon. Member direct.

*Letter from T. W. A. Little to Mr. Nick Ainger, dated 10 April 1995:*

The Minister has asked me to reply to your question about appointments made in the Administrative Assistant and Administrative Officer grades at CVL.

You asked for a breakdown by each quarter from September 1993 until April 1995. For the majority of this time we have not made any appointments in these grades but, where we have, the position is as follows:

| *Quarters* | *Administrative Officer* | *Administrative Assistant* |
|---|---|---|
| 1.4.94–30.6.94 | 1 | — |
| 1.7.94–30.9.94 | — | 10 |
| 1.10.94–31.12.94 | — | 1 |

*Letter from Guy Stapleton to Mr. Nick Ainger, dated 10 April 1995:*

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has asked me to reply to your question about Civil Service appointments made to Administrative Officers and Administrative Assistants in this Agency between September 1993 to April 1995 as this matter is within my operational responsibility.

In the quarter September to December 1993, 20 administrative officers were recruited and appointed. No new appointments in the Administrative Officer or Administrative Assistant grades were made during the remainder of the period between January 1994 to April 1995.

*Letter from J. M. Morris to Mr. Nick Ainger, dated 10 May 1995:*

The Minister of Agriculture has asked me to reply directly to you in answer to your question (Number 1164) which asked how many Civil Service appointments were made to the administrative assistant and administrative officer posts in this Agency in each quarter from September 1993 until April 1995. ADAS was created as an Executive Agency in June 1992 under the joint ownership of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Welsh Office.

The figures that you require are as follows:

| | *Administrative Assistant* | *Administrative Officer* |
|---|---|---|
| 1.9.93–31.12.93 | 1 | 2 |
| 1.1.94–31.3.94 | 1 | 1 |
| 1.4.94–30.6.94 | 1 | 2 |
| 1.7.94–30.9.94 | 0 | 4 |
| 1.10.94–31.12.94 | 2 | 0 |
| 1.1.95–31.3.95 | 0 | 1 |

*Letter from J.M. Rutter to Mr. Nick Ainger, dated 10 May 1995:*

The Minister has asked me to reply to your question about the number of Civil Service appointments made by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate to Administrative Assistant and Administrative Officer posts in each quarter from September 1993 until April 1995, as this is an operational matter for which I am responsible.

During this period, three administrative assistants were appointed in the quarter from 1 July 1994 to 30 September 1994.

*Letter from G.K. Bruce to Mr. Nick Ainger, dated 10 May 1995:*

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has asked me to reply, in respect of the Pesticides Safety Directorate (PSD), to your question about appointment of Administrative Assistants and Administrative Officers since September 1993.

The number of appointments has been as follows:

| | *AA* | *AO* |
|---|---|---|
| September 1993 | 1 | 0 |
| October–December 1993 | 0 | 0 |
| January–March 1994 | 0 | 0 |
| April–June 1994 | 0 | 0 |
| July–September 1994 | 3 | 2 |
| October–December 1994 | 15 | 10 |
| January–March 1995 | 1 | 0 |

The appointments made in the second half of 1994 were as a result of the relocation of PSD from London to York in October last year.

*Letter from P I Stanley to Mr. Nick Ainger, dated 10 April 1995:*

Number of civil service appointments to administrative assistant and administrative officer posts in MAFF and its agencies from September 1993–April 1995.

The number of Civil Service appointments to the Administrative Assistant (AA) and Administrative Officer (AO) grades, made by the Central Science Laboratory (CSL) for each quarter during the period between September 1993 and April 1995 are as follows:

| *Quarter* | *AA grade* | *AO grade* |
|---|---|---|
| 1.10.93–31.12.93 | 4 | 0 |
| 1.1.94–31.3.94 | 2 | 1 |
| 1.4.94–30.6.94 | 0 | 1 |
| 1.7.94–30.9.94 | 0 | [1] |
| 1.10.94–31.12.94 | 0 | 0 |
| 1.1.95–31.3.95 | 0 | 0 |

[1] Fixed-term appointment

### National Vocational Qualifications

**Mr. Barron:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many and what proportion of vacancies advertised by his Department, and by each of his Department's agencies, in the last three years have listed the attainment of national vocational qualifications as an acceptable entry requirement; and, of those, how many have required (i) level 1 NVQs, (ii) level 2 NVQs, (iii) level 3 NVQs and (iv) other level NVQs. [22979]

**Mr. Jack:** None.

### Republic of Ireland

**Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to what extent the British Govnerment directly financially support agriculture in the Republic of Ireland. [23044]

**Mr. Jack:** The Govnerment do not provide any direct financial support to agriculture in the Republic of Ireland.

### Tobacco Sector

**Mr. Marlow:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what procedure is available to establish whether the former head of the European Commission's tobacco sector was involved in any misdemeanour. [22771]

**Mr. Jack:** The Commission called in the Belgian police to investigate the circumstances surrounding the suicide of the former head of the tobacco sector. Separately the matter was subject to internal investigation by the Commission. We understand that inquiries are continuing with the competent authorities in Italy and Greece relating to this investigation.

Suspected tobacco irregularities have been of interest to the Govnerment and every opportunity is taken to press the Commission for information on what action it has taken. In this respect, the European Parliament, in its draft report on the discharge of the 1993 European Communities budget, has specifically asked the Commission to inform it about the measures it has taken so far to implement the conclusions in the European Court of Auditors special report on the operation of the tobacco regime. The Government welcome this as it will provide the opportunity to apply further pressure on the Commission on the question of irregularities.

### Table Wine

**Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, if he will make a statement on the figures for wine consumption in table 4.14 of "National Diet and Nutrition Survey: Children aged $1\frac{1}{2}$ to $4\frac{1}{2}$ years." [23258]

**Mrs. Browning:** The survey shows that a small number of children, less than 1 per cent. of those surveyed, consumed small quantities of wine during the four days for which the dietary record was kept. The mean daily intake was 4.3 g—less than 1 teaspoon—and the maximum daily intake was 14.4g—about 1 tablespoon. Although it is unlikely that the health of these children will be damaged by these small amounts of wine, we will be including advice to avoid giving alcohol to young children in a future "Food Sense" booklet aimed at providing advice on healthy feeding to parents of pre-school children.

### Common Agricultural Policy

**Mr. Marlow:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to what extent he takes into account the relative financial transfer to United Kingdom farmers as against other EU farmers and the effect on the United Kingdom's net contribution to the EU when he assesses possible changes in the CAP. [22774]

**Mr. Jack** *[holding answer 9 May 1995]:* The factors taken into account in Council negotiations on proposals for changes to the CAP are covered in the explanatory memoranda which my Department prepares whenever such proposals are issued. Copies of explanatory memoranda are available in the Library of the House.

## NATIONAL HERITAGE

### Equal Opportunities

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will publish the gender assessment being prepared by his Department. [21487]

**Mr. Sproat:** This Department's policy, in line with the guidance issued in 1992 by the ministerial group on women's issues, is that policy proposals should ensure that unlawful or unjustifiable sex or race discrimination does not occur and that similar principles apply to people with disabilities, older people or ex-offenders. This scrutiny is part of a continuous and routine process, as part of policy advice to Ministers.

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what progress he hopes to achieve in his Department over the next three months to push forward the declaration signed in October 1994 at the Vienna conference in preparation for the fourth UN conference on women; and if he will agree to incorporate a section on equal opportunities in his department's annual report. [21488]

**Mr. Sproat:** The Government are committed to the principles set out in the regional platform for action agreed at the preparatory conference in Vienna for the

fourth UN world conference on women. We have taken these forward through a wide range of programmes and initiatives and will continue to do so. The DNH annual report in each of the last two years refers to the progress the Department is making on equal opportunities issues.

### Royal Naval College, Greenwich

**Mr. Raynsford:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if his Department will assume responsibility for the maintenance of the premises in Greenwich formerly occupied by the Royal Naval college and the Joint Services Defence college. [22210]

**Mr. Sproat:** The Department of National Heritage is jointly responsible with the Ministry of Defence for the maintenance of the premises currently occupied by the Royal Naval college. As my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces explained on 30 March, *Official Report*, columns *746-47*, decisions on the future of the Royal Naval college site have yet to be taken, but it is hoped that a further announcement will be made before the end of the year. Decisions will take into account the importance of ensuring that, as far as possible, these fine historic buildings are properly maintained in future.

## HOME DEPARTMENT

### Metropolitan Police

**Ms Jowell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what was the total amount spent by the Metropolitan police force on driver training in each year since 1975; [22653]

(2) how many Metropolitan police officers took *(a)* basic, *(b)* intermediate and *(c)* advanced driving courses in each year since 1975; [22654]

(3) how many police officers with the advanced driving qualification were employed by the Metropolitan police force in *(a)* 1994, *(b)* 1991, *(c)* 1987, *(d)* 1983, *(e)* 1979 and *(f)* 1975. [22655]

**Mr. Maclean:** The following is the information requested for the years after 1990. I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that, prior to 1991, such information is not retained in a form which allows it to be readily retrieved:

| *Year* | *Amount spent on driver training £* | *Number of officers taking intermediate[1] course* | *Number of officers taking advanced course* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1991 | 2,421,480 | 533 | 327 |
| 1992 | 3,007,290 | 826 | 312 |
| 1993 | 3,277,560 | 1,200 | 246 |
| 1994 | 2,260,830 | 750 | 228 |

[1] The intermediate course is the first level of driver training beyond possession of a full driving licence.

In 1991 there were 4,794 officers in the Metropolitan police who held advanced driving qualifications. The number in 1994 was 5,486.

### Police Patrol Vehicles (Accidents)

**Ms Jowell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) pursuant to his answer of 4 April, *Official Report*, column *1019*, how many of the accidents which resulted in civilian injuries in each year since 1991 involved *(a)* basic patrol vehicles, *(b)* area or fast response vehicles and *(c)* unmarked police vehicles; [22656]

(2) pursuant to his answer of 4 April, *Official Report*, column *1019*, how many of the accidents which resulted in civilian injuries in each year since 1991 involved police drivers who had not been trained to advanced level. [22657]

**Mr. Maclean:** The following shows the number of road traffic accidents involving police patrol vehicles since 1991; the numbers of injuries to civilians and police officers; and the number of accidents involving drivers trained to advanced level which resulted in civilian injuries.

The figures for injuries to civilians and police officers given in my answer of 4 April, column *1019*, were transposed in three places and the following table corrects that error.

| *Year* | *(a) Number of accidents* | *(b) Number of civilian injuries* | *(c) Number of police officer injuries* | *(d) Total (b)+(c)* | *(e) Accidents resulting in civilian injuriesadvanced class driver* | *Other* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1991 | 4,150 | 366 | 671 | 1,037 | 123 | 180 |
| 1992 | 4,143 | 318 | 710 | 1,028 | 121 | 173 |
| 1993 | 4,246 | 372 | 831 | 1,203 | 136 | 191 |
| 1994 | 4,063 | 321 | 858 | 1,179 | 113 | 176 |

These figures do not include accidents in which a police vehicle was in the vicinity but not directly involved.

The Metropolitan police did not record the type of vehicle involved in accidents prior to January 1995.

**Mr. Bernie Grant:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons have been knocked down by speeding police vehicles in each of the last three years *(a)* nationally and *(b)* in the Metropolitan police area; how many have been fatally injured; and how much compensation has been paid out in each of the last three years. [22943]

**Mr. Maclean:** The latest information available centrally on accidents involving police vehicles for police forces in England and Wales, excluding the Metropolitan police, is for the period 1991–1993 and is shown in table A. The latest available figures for the Metropolitan police are for the period 1992–94 and are shown in table B.

The information in both tables relates to death and serious injury caused to both police officers and civilians in the course of either police pursuits or responses to emergency calls. Information about any compensation paid by the police following these accidents is not available centrally.

*Table A: Police vehicle accidents in England and Wales (excluding the Metropolitan Police)*

| Force Name | Police fatal injury | | | Police serious injury | | | Civilian fatal injury | | | Civilian serious injury | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1991 | 1992 | 1993 | 1991 | 1992 | 1993 | 1991 | 1992 | 1993 | 1991 | 1992 | 1993 |
| Avon and Somerset | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 11 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 5 | 11 | 5 |
| Bedfordshire | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Cambridgeshire | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 3 |
| Cheshire | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 5 | 6 | 3 |
| Cleveland | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 0 |
| Cumbria | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 1 |
| Derbyshire | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Devon and Cornwall | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Dorset | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 3 |
| Durham | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 |
| Essex | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 |
| Gloucestershire | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Greater Manchester | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 15 | 4 | 41 |
| Hampshire | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 7 | 0 | 2 |
| Hertfordshire | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 4 | 2 |
| Humberside | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 6 |
| Kent | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| Lancashire | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 7 | 2 | 4 |
| Leicestershire | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 12 | 2 |
| Lincolnshire | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| City of London | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 1 |
| Merseyside | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 7 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 26 | 21 | 4 |
| Norfolk | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 |
| Northamptonshire | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Northumbria | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 1 | 10 |
| North Yorkshire | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 5 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 5 | 7 |
| Nottinghamshire | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 0 |
| South Yorkshire | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 6 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 9 | 10 | 4 |
| Staffordshire | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Suffolk | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 8 |
| Surrey | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| Sussex | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 5 | 6 |
| Thames Valley | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 6 | 5 | 11 |
| Warwickshire | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| West Mercia | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| West Midlands | 0 | 0 | 1 | 9 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| West Yorkshire | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| Wiltshire | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Dyfed-Powys | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Gwent | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| North Wales | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| South Wales | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 7 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 12 | 2 |
| Total | 2 | 1 | 3 | 60 | 56 | 62 | 27 | 21 | 19 | 130 | 129 | 142 |

*Table B: Police vehicle accidents (Metropolitan Police)*

| Police fatal injury | | | Police serious injury | | | Civilian fatal injury | | | Civilian serious injury | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1992 | 1993 | 1994 | 1992 | 1993 | 1994 | 1992 | 1993 | 1994 | 1992 | 1993 | 1994 |
| 1 | 2 | 2 | 56 | 51 | 46 | 7 | 10 | 10 | 59 | 45 | 31 |

## Joint Enterprise Cases

**Mr. Jamieson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the review undertaken by his Department into joint enterprise cases in which a child has lost its life. [22918]

**Mr. Maclean:** I am considering the issues raised by joint enterprise cases in which a child loses it life, and hope to reach a conclusion soon.

## "Action Against Crime"

**Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the bodies involved in drafting his Department's "Action Against Crime" pack. [22919]

**Mr. Maclean:** The "Action Against Crime" pack was drafted by officials in my Department.

### Knives

**Mr. Jim Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what consideration he has given to restrictions on the buying of knives by children; [22722]

(2) what representations he has received on the purchase of knives by children. [22725]

**Mr. Maclean:** The question of the sale of knives to children has been raised with my right hon. and learned Friend from time to time—he has received three letters from hon. Members about this in the last 12 months. Banning such sales would do little to reduce the availability of knives given that they are available in most homes.

**Mr. Jim Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what talks he has had with the police on the control of knives; [22723]

(2) what work has been carried out on behalf of his Department to define for legislative purposes the difference between assault and working knives; and what plans he has to resume this work. [22727]

**Mr. Maclean:** Chief officers of police were last formally consulted about controls on the sale of knives during the preparation of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 (Offensive Weapons) Order 1988. This lists 14 weapons the sale of which is prohibited. No item has been added to the list. We will consider adding to the list weapons which have no legitimate use and have some feature which enables them to be distinguished from ordinary knives. Whether these criteria apply is considered in relation to individual items. An assault knife, although possibly offensive in the way it is described, may, depending on its exact specification, not be distinguishable in practice from an ordinary domestic knife.

**Mr. Jim Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the figures for knife-related incidents for each of the last five years *(a)* for the country as a whole and *(b)* by region. [22724]

**Mr. Maclean:** The available information relates to an ad hoc survey concerning notifiable offences recorded by the police in which knives were involved. The results were published in table 2.24 of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, 1989". A copy of this publication is available in the Library.

**Mr. Jim Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many children were arrested for knife-related incidents in each of the last five years *(a)* in the country as a whole and *(b)* by region. [22726]

**Mr. Maclean:** This information is not collected centrally.

### Parole

**Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average current delay in parole for prisoners in *(a)* London and *(b)* England and Wales. [22835]

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** Provisional figures for the period January to April inclusive 1995 show that, out of 794 prisoners in England and Wales notified of their parole decisions, 237 were notified before their parole eligibility date or its anniversary. The remainder were notified of decisions, on average, 7.7 weeks after their parole eligibility date or its anniversary. These figures include decisions to refuse as well as decisions to grant parole.

I regret that information relating to London is not available separately.

### Crime Victims

**Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects the statement of service standards for victims of crime to be published. [22839]

**Mr. Maclean:** We hope to publish the statement in July.

### Naturalisation

**Mr. Parry:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average time it takes to process applications for naturalisation at the most recent date; what was the time five years ago; and if he will make a statement. [23657]

**Mr. Nicholas Baker:** The average waiting time for certificates of naturalisation issued in April 1995 was 13 months, compared with 28 months in April 1990.

### Manslaughter

**Mrs Roche:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what guidance is given by his Department to *(a)* the judiciary and *(b)* secure mental hospitals regarding the minimum length of time for which those convicted of manslaughter on the ground of diminished responsibility should be detained in a secure mental hospital. [23519]

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** The law does not provide for the period of detention under a hospital order to be fixed in advance. A patient subject to such an order will be detained until this is judged to be no longer necessary on account of his health or safety or the safety of others. Where a hospital order is accompanied by a restriction order, the power of discharge by the responsible medical officer may be exercised only with the consent of my right hon. and learned Friend.

### Blasphemy

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the benefits and disbenefits of retaining the offence of blasphemy on the statute book. [22941]

**Mr. Maclean:** My right hon. and learned Friend considers that an unacceptable legal vacuum would be created if the legal protection afforded by the law on blasphemy were removed and nothing introduced in its place. It would be a mistake to attempt to legislate on what is a sensitive matter of conscience without a wide consensus as to the best way forward; in the Government's view there is no such consensus.

### Unescorted Prisoners

**Mr. Heppell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangements are made to secure

the safety of the public and railway employees when prisoners travel unescorted by train. [21657]

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

*Letter from A. J. Pearson to Mr. John Heppell, dated 10 May 1995:*

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the director general from the office, to reply to your recent Question about the arrangements made to secure the safety of the public and railway employees when prisoners travel unescorted by train.

Following the announcement made by the Home Secretary on 6 April about changes to the Prison Rules, new stricter arrangements for the unescorted temporary release of prisoners were implemented on 25 April. Under the new system, there will be substantially fewer prisoners released on temporary licence and prisoners will have to serve longer in prison before their application for release on licence will be considered. Governors may only release suitable eligible prisoners for specific and justifiable purposes if they have satisfied a stringent risk assessment which includes an assessment of the proposed travelling arrangements and the prisoner's compliance with the terms of the licence issued. Instructions to Governors governing the new national policy of release on temporary licence are set out in Prison Service Instruction 36/1995, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

### Accelerated Promotion Scheme

**Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of prison staff on the accelerated promotion scheme are of ethnic minority origin. [23092]

**Mr. Michael Forsyth** *[holding answer 9 May 1995]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

*Letter from A. J. Pearson to Mr. Doug Hoyle, dated 10 May 1995:*

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about the proportion of prison staff on the Accelerated Promotion Scheme who are of ethnic minority origin.

There are at present 89 members of the Prison Service on the Accelerated Promotion Scheme, none of whom is of ethnic minority origin.

### Accounting Officers

**Mr. Meacher:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many times in the last 10 years, and on which dates, his departmental accounting officer has issued a minute in that role; and what was the issue in each case. [22568]

**Mr. Howard** *[holding answer 9 May 1995]:* Where a Minister overrules an accounting officer's advice on an issue of propriety or regularity or one of value for money, the accounting officer should request a written instruction from the Minister to take the action in question.

All such instructions are reported to the Comptroller and Auditor General who, after making whatever investigations he considers appropriate, will report his findings to the Committee of Public Accounts.

There are no known instances of this in the Home Office in the last 10 years.

### Asylum Procedures

**Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what indicators or other methodologies are used to measure the impact of training on performance of officials in admission and asylum procedures. [22751]

**Mr. Nicholas Baker** *[holding answer 5 May 1995]:* The quality of decision making is monitored by senior officers. An important measure of quality is the number of refusal decisions which are upheld on appeal by the independent appellate authorities. At present only 5 per cent. of appeals by failed asylum seekers are allowed by special adjudicators.

## ENVIRONMENT

### Interim Development Orders

**Ms Janet Anderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many interim development order permissions were re-registered within one specified time limit, broken down by local authority area, indicating in each case the name of the company making the application. [22604]

**Sir Paul Beresford:** This information is not held centrally. However, according to statistics prepared for the County Planning Officers Society the following number of IDOs was registered in England and Wales, broken down by region:

| *Region* | *Number* |
|---|---|
| Northern (31): | Cumbria 3<br>Northumberland 10<br>Tyne and Wear 1<br>Durham 17 |
| Yorkshire and Humberside (44) | |
| North West (22): | Lancashire 18<br>Greater Manchester 3<br>Cheshire 1 |
| East Midlands (64): | Derbyshire 12<br>Nottinghamshire 14<br>Lincolnshire 13<br>Leicestershire 24<br>Northamptonshire 1 |
| West Midlands (54): | Shropshire 10<br>Staffordshire 33<br>Walsall 5<br>Warwickshire 6 |
| East Anglia (17): | Cambridgeshire 7<br>Norfolk 7<br>Suffolk 3 |
| South East (103): | Oxfordshire 7<br>Buckinghamshire 3<br>Bedfordshire 7<br>Hertfordshire 7<br>Essex 13<br>Berkshire 7<br>Hampshire 8<br>Surrey 6<br>West Sussex 18<br>East Sussex 7<br>Kent 20 |

| Region | Number |
|---|---|
| South West (99): | Cornwall 18 |
| | Devon 17 |
| | Somerset 24 |
| | Dorset 13 |
| | Wiltshire 2 |
| | Avon 22 |
| | Gloucestershire 3 |
| Wales (74): | Gwynedd 13 |
| | Clwyd 16 |
| | Dyfed 19 |
| | Powys 7 |
| | West Glamorgan 2 |
| | Mid Glamorgan 8 |
| | South Glamorgan 5 |
| | Gwent 4 |

There was only one time period allowed for registration applications to be submitted to local mineral planning authorities. This period was six months and ran from 25 September 1991 to 25 March 1992—see paragraph 8a of MPG8.

### Private Finance Initiative

**Mr. Simpson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of his Department's budget is allocated to initiatives which have been undertaken to secure private finance for his Department's projects. [22798]

**Sir Paul Beresford:** The Department and its sponsored bodies seek to maximise the amount of private finance it raises to assist in the implementation of a wide variety of programmes, most notably in housing, inner cities and urban regeneration. Over 60 per cent. of the Department's discretionary expenditure—excluding demand led programmes such as housing revenue account subsidy—is on programmes which attract private finance. The Department expects to generate some £4 billion of private investment this financial year.

### Housing Capital Receipts, Harrogate

**Mr. Robert Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what were the gross receipts from the sales of *(a)* council dwellings, *(b)* property assets and *(c)* land assets realised by Harrogate borough council for each of the last five years. [22804]

**Mr. Robert B. Jones:** The information reported by Harrogate borough council is as follows. The figures for council house sales are based on their value after discount, and without subtracting the value of any mortgage lending by the local authority.

*Housing capital receipts in Harrogate borough council (excluding lending for council house purchase)*

£ thousand

| | 1989–90 | 1990–91 | 1991–92 | 1992–93 | 1993–94 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sale of: Council Dwellings | 3,058 | 1,367 | 1,480 | 888 | 1,487 |
| Other property assets | 48 | 89 | 0 | 18 | 0 |
| Sale or lease of land | 57 | 55 | 271 | 278 | 7 |

These receipts figures also exclude any repayments of discount, or sums outstanding, on council house sales; repayments of principal of mortgages to private persons; and repayments of principal of loans to housing associations.

### Radioactive Waste

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library a copy of the document on safety fundamentals and standards for radioactive waste management as agreed by the International Atomic Energy Agency board of governors at its meeting on 27 to 30 March; and what contribution was made by United Kingdom specialists to this document. [22932]

**Mr. Atkins:** A copy of the International Atomic Energy Agency safety fundamentals "The Principles of Radioactive Waste Management" and safety standard No. 1 "Establishing a National Legal System for Radioactive Waste Management", which were adopted by the IAEA board of governors in March, will be placed in the Library when published later this year. The UK made a full contribution to the preparation of these documents.

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what British specialists Her Majesty's Government have nominated for the group of experts being convened by the board of governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency to prepare a convention on the safety of radioactive waste management. [22929]

**Mr. Atkins:** Officials from my Department and, as appropriate, from other Government Departments, agencies and organisations will be involved in preparations for the proposed International Atomic Energy Agency convention on the safety of radioactive waste management.

**Mr. Robert Ainsworth:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what investigations have been carried out into the radioactive waste found at Poplar farm, Northamptonshire, on 13 January; and what these investigations conclude is the source of this material. [23043]

**Mr. Atkins:** The investigations undertaken to date by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution in order to trace the origin of the depleted uranium found at Poplar farm, Chelveston, have included the following: firstly, identifying the type of material found; secondly, identifying the sources of such material; and, finally, visiting all these locations in order to either eliminate them from the investigation, or to identify the site as a possible source for the material. The investigations are still under way.

### National Vocational qualifications

**Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many, and what proportion of, vacancies advertised by his Department, and by each of his Department's agencies, in the last three years have listed the attainment of national vocational qualifications as an acceptable entry requirement; and, of those, how

many have required (i) level 1 NVQs, (ii) level 2 NVQs, (iii) level 3 NVQs and (iv) other level NVQs. [22977]

**Sir Paul Beresford:** My Department, its agencies and DOE personnel staff in Government offices are happy to accept national vocational qualifications at the appropriate level as alternatives to traditional educational qualifications. The Buying Agency has run one advertising scheme in the last three years with NVQs, level 1 or 2 as a requirement—4 per cent. of vacancies. No other vacancies advertised in the last three years have specifically referred to the acceptance of NVQs.

## Domestic Properties

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many domestic properties in *(a)* Lancashire, *(b)* the north-west and *(c)* England are valued below £20,000 and £30,000 and between £30,000 and £40,000. [22942]

**Mr. Robert B. Jones:** The information requested is not available centrally.

Council tax valuation band A covers all properties up to and including those valued at £40,000 on 1 April 1991; properties in band A are not separately graded into the valuations requested.

## Non-domestic Properties

**Mr. Spellar:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the total net rateable value of non-domestic property for each district council in England and for each London borough. [22780]

**Mr. Robert B. Jones:** The table shows the total of rateable values at 1 April 1995 in the local rating lists for all billing authorities in England. In addition, the aggregate of rateable values in the central rating list was £2.9 billion.

| *Authority* | *Rateable Value (£000)* |
|---|---|
| Adur | 24,714 |
| Allerdale | 40,507 |
| Alnwick | 9,696 |
| Amber Valley | 48,477 |
| Arun | 51,079 |
| Ashfield | 39,074 |
| Ashford | 52,964 |
| Aylesbury Vale | 68,138 |
| Babergh | 29,398 |
| Barnsley | 76,570 |
| Barrow in Furness | 34,576 |
| Basildon | 99,390 |
| Basingstoke and Deane | 107,281 |
| Bassetlaw | 49,023 |
| Bath | 64,930 |
| Berwick upon Tweed | 14,048 |
| Birmingham | 633,966 |
| Blaby | 38,629 |
| Blackburn | 66,334 |
| Blackpool | 90,947 |
| Blyth Valle | 27,241 |
| Bolsover | 19,299 |
| Bolton | 116,270 |
| Boothferry | 24,438 |
| Boston | 26,384 |
| Bornemouth | 95,543 |
| Bracknell Forest | 80,040 |
| Bradford | 254,875 |
| Braintree | 59,719 |
| Breckland | 42,669 |
| Brentwood | 44,627 |
| Bridgnorth | 16,495 |
| Brighton | 110,958 |
| Bristol | 311,242 |
| Broadland | 31,553 |
| Bromsgrove | 30,185 |
| Broxbourne | 48,455 |
| Broxtowe | 36,530 |
| Burnley | 38,363 |
| Bury | 67,648 |
| Calderdale | 95,808 |
| Cambridge | 128,797 |
| Cannock Chase | 37,888 |
| Canterbury | 70,937 |
| Caradon | 20,813 |
| Carlisle | 50,625 |
| Carrick | 45,002 |
| Castle Morpeth | 20,791 |
| Castle Point | 24,014 |
| Charnwood | 76,722 |
| Chelmsford | 94,966 |
| Cheltenham | 72,016 |
| Cherwell | 67,997 |
| Chester | 89,723 |
| Chesterfield | 51,352 |
| Chester Le Street | 12,720 |
| Chichester | 60,034 |
| Chiltern | 34,880 |
| Chorley | 29,395 |
| Christchurch | 24,011 |
| Cleethorpes | 33,664 |
| Colchester | 86,150 |
| Congleton | 38,936 |
| Copeland | 80,102 |
| Corby | 57,911 |
| Cotswold | 32,240 |
| Coventry | 183,229 |
| Craven | 27,605 |
| Crawley | 153,496 |
| Crewe and Nantwich | 52,608 |
| Dacorum | 106,548 |
| Darlington | 53,784 |
| Dartford | 52,632 |
| Daventry | 39,111 |
| Derby | 108,388 |
| Derbyshire Dales | 27,686 |
| Derwentside | 21,361 |
| Doncaster | 110,759 |
| Dover | 43,161 |
| Dudley | 161,866 |
| Durham | 40,380 |
| E Yorks Boro' of Beverley | 43,004 |
| Easington | 21,980 |
| East Cambridgeshire | 22,517 |
| East Devon | 36,717 |
| East Dorset | 29,340 |
| East Hampshire | 42,719 |
| East Hertfordshire | 77,872 |
| East Lindsey | 43,910 |
| East Northamptonshire | 25,801 |
| East Staffordshire | 66,825 |
| East Yorkshire | 35,705 |
| Eastbourne | 51,880 |
| Eastleigh | 65,145 |
| Eden | 21,557 |
| Ellesmere Port and Neston | 55,245 |
| Elmbridge | 83,246 |
| Epping Forest | 46,518 |
| Epson and Ewell | 37,510 |
| Erewash | 39,779 |
| Exeter | 88,306 |
| Fareham | 51,999 |

| Authority | Rateable Value (£000) |
|---|---|
| Fenland | 29,445 |
| Forest Heath | 29,009 |
| Forest of Dean | 20,875 |
| Fylde | 36,933 |
| Gateshead | 104,309 |
| Gedling | 35,399 |
| Gillingham | 40,585 |
| Glanford | 44,360 |
| Gloucester | 69,416 |
| Gosport | 18,983 |
| Gravesham | 40,333 |
| Great Grimsby | 50,350 |
| Great Yarmouth | 54,149 |
| Guildford | 111,062 |
| Halton | 73,831 |
| Hambleton | 35,405 |
| Harborough | 34,192 |
| Harlow | 65,010 |
| Harrogate | 82,361 |
| Hart | 37,585 |
| Hartlepool | 38,571 |
| Hastings | 32,418 |
| Havant | 45,281 |
| Hereford | 35,988 |
| Hertsmere | 74,762 |
| High Peak | 33,635 |
| Hinckley and Bosworth | 47,110 |
| Holderness | 17,048 |
| Horsham | 60,607 |
| Hove | 38,519 |
| Huntingdonshire | 67,418 |
| Hyndburn | 32,191 |
| Ipswich | 89,428 |
| Isle of Wight UA | 49,613 |
| Isles of Scilly | 1,560 |
| Kennet | 22,213 |
| Kerrier | 25,429 |
| Kettering | 37,703 |
| Kings Lynn and West Norfolk | 55,157 |
| Kingston upon Hull | 145,844 |
| Kingswood | 23,704 |
| Kirklees | 161,932 |
| Knowsley | 48,842 |
| Lancaster | 56,023 |
| Langbaurgh on Tees | 97,896 |
| Leeds | 474,215 |
| Leicester | 175,442 |
| Leominster | 12,897 |
| Lewes | 36,544 |
| Lichfield | 41,383 |
| Lincoln | 59,206 |
| Liverpool | 236,313 |
| Luton | 103,383 |
| Macclesfield | 97,135 |
| Maidstone | 91,329 |
| Malden | 20,448 |
| Malvern Hills | 27,468 |
| Manchester | 476,469 |
| Mansfield | 38,790 |
| Melton | 19,848 |
| Mendip | 42,931 |
| Mid Bedfordshire | 44,258 |
| Mid Devon | 19,653 |
| Mid Suffolk | 26,253 |
| Mid Sussex | 66,380 |
| Middlesbrough | 66,141 |
| Milton Keynes | 154,498 |
| Mole Valley | 57,004 |
| New Forest | 70,125 |
| Newark and Sherwood | 46,777 |
| Newbury | 97,533 |
| Newcastle upon Tyne | 194,438 |
| Newcastle under Lyme | 48,781 |
| North Bedfordshire | 79,285 |
| North Cornwall | 28,239 |
| North Devon | 42,905 |
| North Dorset | 18,469 |
| North East Derbyshire | 23,306 |
| North Hertfordshire | 63,034 |
| North Kesteven | 22,780 |
| North Norfolk | 33,877 |
| North Shropshire | 17,482 |
| North Tyneside | 67,366 |
| North Warwickshire | 40,616 |
| North West Leicestershire | 56,111 |
| North Wiltshire | 45,220 |
| Northampton | 162,644 |
| Northavon | 87,251 |
| Norwich | 122,783 |
| Nottingham | 211,784 |
| Nuneaton and Bedworth | 54,454 |
| Oadby and Wigston | 19,989 |
| Oldham | 89,781 |
| Oswestry | 13,597 |
| Oxford | 119,126 |
| Pendle | 28,074 |
| Penwith | 21,925 |
| Peterborough | 127,377 |
| Plymouth | 119,587 |
| Poole | 84,959 |
| Portsmouth | 108,984 |
| Preston | 68,497 |
| Purbeck | 32,644 |
| Reading | 144,249 |
| Redditch | 60,415 |
| Reigate and Banstead | 81,585 |
| Restormel | 41,435 |
| Ribble Valley | 18,205 |
| Richmondshire | 14,747 |
| Rochdale | 97,432 |
| Rochester upon Medway | 77,631 |
| Rochford | 23,949 |
| Rossendale | 23,129 |
| Rother | 27,906 |
| Rotherham | 102,388 |
| Rugby | 55,870 |
| Runnymede | 58,314 |
| Rushcliffe | 30,115 |
| Rushmoor | 65,685 |
| Rutland | 13,625 |
| Ryedale | 42,276 |
| Salford | 142,946 |
| Salisbury | 45,064 |
| Sandwell | 180,431 |
| Scarborough | 52,438 |
| Scunthorpe | 58,595 |
| Sedgefield | 38,555 |
| Sedgemoor | 46,300 |
| Sefton | 100,114 |
| Selby | 58,468 |
| Sevenoaks | 52,602 |
| Sheffield | 297,523 |
| Shepway | 36,242 |
| Shrewsbury and Atcham | 54,059 |
| Slough | 125,681 |
| Solihull | 124,244 |
| South Bedfordshire | 64,922 |
| South Buckinghamshire | 40,939 |
| South Cambridgeshire | 62,999 |
| South Derbyshire | 27,063 |
| South Hams | 30,530 |
| South Herefordshire | 19,848 |
| South Holland | 22,817 |
| South Kesteven | 60,577 |
| South Lakeland | 64,820 |
| South Norfolk | 29,469 |

| Authority | Rateable Value (£000) |
|---|---|
| South Northamptonshire | 25,993 |
| South Oxfordshire | 55,626 |
| South Ribble | 38,517 |
| South Shropshire | 11,751 |
| South Somerset | 59,777 |
| South Staffordshire | 30,450 |
| South Tyneside | 46,160 |
| Southampton | 129,884 |
| Southend-on-Sea | 77,994 |
| Spelthorne | 76,112 |
| St. Albans | 93,225 |
| St. Edmundsbury | 60,547 |
| St. Helens | 77,122 |
| Stafford | 58,770 |
| Staffordshire Moorlands | 30,311 |
| Stevenage | 69,998 |
| Stockport | 134,582 |
| Stockton on Tees | 97,761 |
| Stoke on Trent | 141,393 |
| Stratford on Avon | 65,306 |
| Stroud | 38,308 |
| Suffolk Coastal | 57,285 |
| Sunderland | 112,777 |
| Surrey Heath | 60,764 |
| Swale | 59,155 |
| Tameside | 73,591 |
| Tamworth | 39,501 |
| Tandridge | 32,977 |
| Taunton Deane | 51,504 |
| Teesdale | 6,656 |
| Teignbridge | 38,234 |
| Tendring | 44,767 |
| Test Valley | 61,586 |
| Tewkesbury | 29,946 |
| Thamesdown | 151,410 |
| Thanet | 42,318 |
| The Wrekin | 88,505 |
| Three Rivers | 45,504 |
| Thurrock | 128,013 |
| Tonbridge and Malling | 66,556 |
| Torbay | 54,304 |
| Torridge | 14,688 |
| Trafford | 181,022 |
| Tunbridge Wells | 73,482 |
| Tynedale | 21,667 |
| Uttlesford | 39,819 |
| Vale of White Horse | 62,622 |
| Vale Royal | 56,451 |
| Wakefield | 152,449 |
| Walsall | 130,544 |
| Wansbeck | 23,104 |
| Wansdyke | 23,977 |
| Warrington | 135,859 |
| Warwick | 91,713 |
| Watford | 99,346 |
| Waveney | 43,056 |
| Waverley | 59,780 |
| Wealden | 46,687 |
| Wear Valley | 22,606 |
| Wellingborough | 47,408 |
| Welwyn Hatfield | 84,449 |
| West Devon | 13,940 |
| West Dorset | 42,937 |
| West Lancashire | 39,229 |
| West Lindsey | 27,218 |
| West Oxfordshire | 37,034 |
| West Somerset | 13,149 |
| West Wiltshire | 43,604 |
| Weymouth and Portland | 22,063 |
| Wigan | 113,789 |
| Winchester | 65,427 |
| Windsor and Maidenhead | 109,307 |
| Wirral | 108,113 |
| Woking | 68,690 |
| Wokingham | 71,355 |
| Wolverhampton | 127,863 |
| Woodspring | 73,896 |
| Worcester | 62,394 |
| Worthing | 50,048 |
| Wychavon | 53,787 |
| Wycombe | 111,554 |
| Wyre | 37,868 |
| Wyre Forest | 47,208 |
| York | 89,614 |
| England (ex London) | 22,262,087 |
| Barking and Dagenham | 97,790 |
| Barnet | 178,143 |
| Bexley | 107,204 |
| Brent | 168,673 |
| Bromley | 149,087 |
| Camden | 439,981 |
| City of London | 614,420 |
| Croydon | 206,069 |
| Ealing | 208,047 |
| Enfield | 165,834 |
| Greenwich | 97,305 |
| Hackney | 121,632 |
| Hammersmith | 160,436 |
| Haringey | 120,669 |
| Harrow | 108,650 |
| Havering | 118,887 |
| Hillingdon | 465,187 |
| Hounslow | 223,995 |
| Islington | 235,762 |
| Kensington and Chelsea | 298,265 |
| Kingston upon Thames | 120,364 |
| Lambeth | 136,523 |
| Lewisham | 98,409 |
| Merton | 111,793 |
| Newham | 122,598 |
| Redbridge | 102,107 |
| Richmond upon Thames | 99,351 |
| Southwark | 223,084 |
| Sutton | 88,456 |
| Tower Hamlets | 242,841 |
| Waltham Forest | 105,143 |
| Wandsworth | 141,306 |
| Westminster | 1,403,742 |
| London | 7,281,755 |
| England | 29,543,842 |

## Construction Industry

**Mr. MacShane:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans the Government have to *(a)* implement the Latham report and *(b)* introduce legislation on contracts in the construction industry; and if he will make a statement. [22740]

**Mr. Robert B. Jones:** I refer to the answer given to the hon. Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Gapes) on 5 April, *Official Report*, columns *1283–84*, and the answer given to the hon. Member for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Cunningham) on 21 April, *Official Report*, column *286*.

## Business Start-ups

**Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance he has issued regarding the

availability of business start-up allowance following its absorbtion into the single regeneration budget. [22998]

**Sir Paul Beresford:** The bidding guidance issued for the first and second rounds of the SRB challenge fund, published in April 1994 and April 1995 respectively, made it clear that the fund is available to provide business support. Copies of the guidance is in the Library of the House. Subject to the preparation of delivery plans, some 60,000 new business start-ups are forecast to be supported under schemes approved in round 1. Successful bidders are expected to ensure that local people know what assistance is available.

Training and enterprise councils can also continue to support those intending to start up in business through the training for work programme or, where circumstances allow, from their own resources. TECs publicise these arrangements in whatever way seems appropriate locally.

**Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the effect of changes to the administration and availability and take-up of the business start-up allowance following its incorporation into the single regeneration budget; and if he will make a statement. [22996]

**Sir Paul Beresford:** The business start-up scheme became part of the single regeneration budget on 1 April 1994 and ceased as a separate programme on 31 March 1995. Participants starting before then will continue to receive the agreed levels of support. Support for new businesses is one of the objectives of the SRB challenge fund. Subject to the preparation of delivery plans some 60,000 business start-ups are forecast to be supported under schemes approved in the first challenge fund bidding round. The second bidding round was launched on 12 April and this will provide further opportunities for similar support.

### Commercial Leases

**Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to ensure that smaller landlords are adequately protected under the terms of commercial leases. [22692]

**Mr. Robert B. Jones:** Lease terms are a private contractual matter for the parties; it is up to them to take appropriate professional advice to ensure that their leases give them adequate protection.

If the hon. Member's questions are prompted by specific cases, he may wish to write to me with details for further comments.

**Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to ensure that commercial tenants do not gain unfair advantages through legal loopholes in commercial leases. [22691]

**Mr. Robert B. Jones:** Commercial lease terms are a matter for negotiation between the parties prior to occupation. No doubt each party will seek to use its bargaining strengths but it should ensure professional advice is sought to avoid terms which are potentially damaging.

If the hon. Member's questions are prompted by specific cases he may wish to write to me with details for further comments.

### Tree Preservation

**Sir Irvine Patnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total number of tree preservation orders issued by Sheffield city council for each of the last two years; and if he will make a statement. [23073]

**Mr. Atkins:** The information requested is not held centrally.

**Sir Irvine Patnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice is issued by his Department to local authorities regarding tree preservation orders; and if he will make a statement. [23072]

**Mr. Atkins:** To supplement existing advice in DOE circular 36/78, my Department published a comprehensive guide to the tree preservation order system for local planning authorities in October 1994—*"Tree Preservation Orders—A Guide to the Law and Good Practice"*. Copies have been placed in the Library of the House.

**Sir Irvine Patnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to change planning law to protect trees. [23075]

**Mr. Atkins:** I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) on 21 July 1994, *Official Report*, columns *450-52*.

### Training

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, what special training is given to persons who have responsibility for assessing the historical significance of documents held by his Department. [23287]

**Sir Paul Beresford:** Training in assessing the historical significance of departmental records is carried out under the guidance of the Keeper of Public Records. It is provided in a number of different ways, including courses on the appraisal of records and through conferences and seminars arranged by the Public Record Office.

### Enterprise Zones

**Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on co-operation between the Welsh Office and his Department in relation to the designation of enterprise zones; what is the average length of time the necessary procedures take; and if he will make a statement. [21975]

**Sir Paul Beresford:** Enterprise zones in Wales are the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Wales. I am satisfied that there is full co-operation between my Department, other interested Government Departments and the Welsh Office in considering the case for designating further enterprise zones in Wales. The arrangements for establishing enterprise zones, including those for enforcing European Community restrictions on state aids, mean that zones now take at least two years to designate.

### Special Protection Areas

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those sites which *(a)* have been designated or *(b)* meet the criteria for designation as (i) special protection areas under the European

Community directive on the conservation of wild birds or (ii) Ramsar sites under the convention of wetlands of international importance. [22367]

**Sir Paul Beresford:** The following table lists all those sites in England which have been designated as either special protection areas, or Ramsar sites, or both.

| *Site* | *County* | *SPA/Ramsar* | *Date designated* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Bridgwater Bay | Somerset | Ramsar | 5.1.76 |
| Bure Marshes | Norfolk | Ramsar | 5.1.76 |
| Hickling Broad and Horsey Mere | Norfolk | Ramsar | 5.1.76 |
| Lindisfarne | Northumberland | SPA/Ramsar | 5.1.76 |
| | | Extended | 11.3.92 |
| Minsmere-Walberswick | Suffolk | SPA/Ramsar | 5.1.76 |
| | | Extended | 19.5.92 |
| North Norfolk Coast | Norfolk | SPA/Ramsar | 5.1.76 |
| | | Extended | 20.1.89 |
| Ouse Washes | Cambridgeshire/Norfolk | SPA/Ramsar | 5.1.76 |
| | | Extended | 5.3.93 |
| Abberton Reservoir | Essex | Ramsar | 24.7.81 |
| | | SPA | 5.12.91 |
| Rostherne Mere | Cheshire | Ramsar | 24.7.81 |
| Moor House | Cumbria | SPA | 31.8.82 |
| Orfordness-Havergate | Suffolk | SPA | 31.8.82 |
| Ribble Estuary | Lancashire | SPA | 31.8.82 |
| The Swale | Kent | SPA/Ramsar | 31.8.82 |
| | | Extended | 17.7.85 |
| | | Further extended | 15.12.93 |
| Chesil Beach and The Fleet | Dorset | SPA/Ramsar | 17.7.85 |
| Chew Valley Lake | Avon | SPA | 17.7.85 |
| Coquet Island | Northumberland | SPA | 17.7.85 |
| Dee Estuary | Clwyd, Cheshire and Merseyside | SPA/Ramsar | 17.7.85 |
| Derwent Ings (part of Lower Derwent Valley) | North Yorkshire/Humberside | SPA/Ramsar | 17.7.85 |
| Farne Islands | Northumberland | SPA | 17.7.85 |
| Holburn Lake and Moss | Northumberland | SPA/Ramsar | 17.7.85 |
| Irthinghead Mires | Cumbria/Northumberland | Ramsar | 17.7.85 |
| Alt Estuary | Merseyside | SPA/Ramsar | 28.11.85 |
| Leighton Moss | Lancashire | SPA/Ramsar | 28.11.85 |
| Martin Mere | Lancashire | SPA/Ramsar | 28.11.85 |
| Rockliffe Marshes (part of Upper Solway Flats and Marshes) | Cumbria | SPA/Ramsar | 23.9.86 |
| Chichester and Langstone Harbours | Hampshire/West Sussex | SPA/Ramsar | 28.10.87 |
| Upper Severn Estuary | Gloucestershire | SPA/Ramsar | 5.2.88 |
| The Wash | Lincolnshire/Norfolk | SPA/Ramsar | 30.3.88 |
| Pagham Harbour | West Sussex | SPA/Ramsar | 30.3.88 |
| Redgrave and Lopham Fens | Norfolk/Suffolk | Ramsar | 15.2.91 |
| Rutland Water | Leicestershire | SPA/Ramsar | 4.10.91 |
| Esthwaite Water | Cumbria | Ramsar | 7.11.91 |
| Walmore Common | Gloucestershire | SPA/Ramsar | 5.12.91 |
| Exe Estuary | Devon | SPA/Ramsar | 11.3.92 |
| Old Hall Marshes | Essex | SPA/Ramsar | 11.3.92 |
| Chippenham Fen | Cambridgeshire | Ramsar | 11.3.92 |
| Porton Down | Wiltshire/Hampshire | SPA | 3.7.92 |
| Upper Solway Flats and Marshes | Cumbria, Dumfries and Galloway | SPA/Ramsar | 30.11.92 |
| Roydon Common | Norfolk | Ramsar | 5.3.93 |
| Great Yarmouth North Denes | Norfolk | SPA | 5.3.93 |
| Nene Washes | Cambridgeshire | SPA/Ramsar | 5.3.93 |
| Gibraltar Point (Wash Phase II) | Lincolnshire | SPA/Ramsar | 5.3.93 |
| Flamborough Head and Bempton Cliffs | Humberside/North Yorkshire | SPA | 5.3.93 |
| Hornsea Mere | Humberside | SPA | 5.3.93 |
| Hamford Water | Essex | SPA/Ramsar | 8.6.93 |
| Lower Derwent Valley | North Yorkshire/Humberside | SPA/Ramsar | 8.6.93 |
| New Forest | Hampshire | SPA/Ramsar | 22.9.93 |
| Malham Tarn | North Yorkshire | Ramsar | 28.10.93 |
| Salisbury Plain | Wiltshire | SPA | 3.11.93 |
| Medway Estuary | Kent | SPA/Ramsar | 15.12.93 |
| Bowland Fells | Lancashire | SPA | 16.12.93 |
| Stodmarsh | Kent | SPA/Ramsar | 16.12.93 |
| Benfleet and Southend Marshes | Essex | SPA/Ramsar | 14.2.94 |
| Thursley, Hankley and Frensham Commons (Wealden Heaths PhI) | Surrey/Hampshire | SPA/Ramsar | 14.2.94 |

| Site | County | SPA/Ramsar | Date designated |
|---|---|---|---|
| Dengie | Essex | SPA/Ramsar | 24.3.94 |
| Midland Meres and Mosses | Cheshire, Staffordshire and Shropshire | Ramsar | 9.5.94 |
| Stour and Orwell Estuary | Essex/Suffolk | SPA/Ramsar | 13.7.94 |
| Humber Flats, Marshes and Coast Phase 1 | Humberside/Lincolnshire | SPA/Ramsar | 28.7.94 |
| Thanet Coast and Sandwich Bay | Kent | SPA/Ramsar | 28.7.94 |
| Colne Estuary | Essex | SPA/Ramsar | 28.7.94 |
| Broadland | Norfolk/Suffolk | SPA/Ramsar | 21.9.94 |
| Ribble and Alt Estuaries Phase 2 | Lancashire/Merseyside | SPA/Ramsar | 16.2.95 |
| Portsmouth Harbour | Hampshire | SPA/Ramsar | 28.2.95 |
| River Crouch Marshes | Essex | SPA/Ramsar | 24.3.95 |

A list of areas identified on the basis of scientific evidence as potentially qualifying for classification as special protection areas in England was published in planning policy guidance note 9, issued in October 1994. This list and the list of potential Ramsar sites is currently under review. When this work is completed a revised list will be published.

### Women's Refuges

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what funding is provided by Her Majesty's Government to support women's refuges throughout the United Kingdom; how much is to be provided in each of the next three years; and if he will make a statement. [23093]

**Mr. Robert B. Jones:** In 1995–96 the Government will be providing through the Housing Corporation about £3.25 million in revenue support for 1,910 bed spaces in women's refuges, and capital amounting to £2.5 million to develop further schemes. The Government are also making available to the Women's Aid Federation (England) £151,200 in core funding to provide support services for women and children who are victims of domestic violence in the home; £49,000 towards their national telephone help line and £55,000 over three years to fund a national housing co-ordinator. Other Government funding includes £252,662 to Welsh Women's Aid and an estimated £362,000 for projects in individual refuges and advice centres in Wales; £45,000 to Scottish Women's Aid for projects associated with tackling homelessness by women escaping domestic violence; and £159,609 in grant under sections 9 and 10 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 for training and administration costs.

Funding for future years depends upon the outcome of public expenditure decisions.

### Recycling

**Sir Kenneth Carlisle:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which local authorities will receive supplementary credit approval resources for recycling projects in 1995–96; and if he will make a statement. [23930]

**Mr. Atkins:** I am announcing today the allocation of £16.4 million in supplementary credit approval resources for investment in recycling by local authorities in 1995–96. This is the fifth year of the programme, and we have been able to allocate more resources than ever before.

The £16.4 million of SCAs available for 1995–96 forms part of the Government's environmental partnership initiative, which aims to maximise investment through a combination of Government resources, authorities' own resources and private sector contributions. Authorities which aim to do this have done well in the allocations.

A variety of schemes, ranging from large scale material reclamation facilities to home composting initiatives, have received support. Schemes to collect waste oil, and chlorofluorocarbons and plastics have been given particular priority.

We have received bids totalling over £23 million. Each authority is today being notified of the outcome of its bid. A list of the allocations has been placed in the Library.

Some authorities have already received considerable support from the private sector to develop recycling projects and we expect to see private sector funding increase as industry works towards achieving recovery targets as part of our producer responsibility initiative.

For instance, one of the objectives of our producer responsibility initiative for packaging waste is to extend "close-to home" recycling facilities to eight out of 10 homes by the year 2000. If the packaging industry is to meet this target, it will need to work with local authorities to build on the recycling infrastructure which they have already established.

Many local authorities are promoting composting as a means of contributing to the target of recycling 25 per cent. of household waste by the year 2000. The Government are keen to support new composting initiatives which make good environmental and economic sense.

The composting schemes supported this year include some large scale composting plants, but the majority are home composting schemes, which put the onus on householders to make better use of their own garden and kitchen waste. We all need to take responsibility for the waste we produce and I would urge householders to support these initiatives where the opportunity arises.

### Special Wastes

**Mr. Mans:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the interim technical guidance on special wastes will be produced for consultation. [23931]

**Mr. Atkins:** We are publishing the interim technical guidance on special wastes for consultation today. Our consultation paper on the special waste regulations and the hazardous waste directive issued on 27 March concerned the procedural controls which would apply under the revised special waste regulations. This technical guidance document sets out a series of desk procedures

for checking whether a particular waste has characteristics which show it to fall within the control system of the regulations. It will be "interim" guidance until the Department is ready to publish a complete revision of waste management paper No. 23. The consultation period will be until 8 June 1995.

### Contaminated Land

**Mr. Faber:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance he is planning to issue in respect of contaminated land. [23932]

**Mr. Atkins:** My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has today issued a draft of the guidance on the definition and identification of contaminated land which will help inform the debate on the contaminated land clause of the Environment Bill. Copies have been placed in the Library. Further guidance as set out in the clause, including guidance on remediation standards and notices, special sites and the "appropriate person" on whom to serve a remediation notice will follow in due course.

In addition, the draft issued today contains an extensive list of technical guidance reports that my Department has either issued or has in hand. This represents a very important contribution to the methodology of dealing with contaminated land.

Furthermore, the Construction Industry Research and Information Association will be publishing 12 reports on contaminated land which are part-funded by my Department, working in partnership with the construction industry. The first batch of these will be launched at the forthcoming International Land Regeneration Expo 95 on 23 May 1995. Once again, these reports will form an important body of expertise for those working with contaminated land.

### Housing Association Tenancies

**Mr. Burden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the total numbers of tenancies provided by housing associations that are *(a)* charitable, *(b)* charities and *(c)* non-charitable in the west midlands; and how many of these tenancies are included within the right-to-buy legislation. [22762]

**Mr. Robert B. Jones** *[holding answer 9 May 1995]:* The total number of self-contained units for rent owned by housing associations in the west midlands is 71,108. Of these, charitable associations own 36,270 units, associations which are charities own 7,676 units and non-charitable associations own 27,162 units. Most secure tenants of non-charitable associations registered with the Housing Corporation have the right to buy their homes. There are various exclusions from the RTB—for example special rules apply to sheltered housing for the elderly, disabled or mentally ill people. In England some 29 per cent. of housing association tenants have the right to buy. Detailed regional figures are not available.

### Social Housing

**Mr. Timms:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will publish the background information on the need for new social housing lettings which he used in his decisions on the 1995–96 Housing Corporation approved development programme.

**Mr. Robert B. Jones** *[pursuant to his reply, 1 February 1995, c.685-86]:* My right hon. Friend has today sent a paper on estimates of housing demand to the Environment Select Committee as an annexe to my Department's supplementary memorandum on its annual report and estimates. A copy has also been placed in the Library,

## SOCIAL SECURITY

### Pensions Bill

**Mr. Jim Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what consultations he has had with hon. Members with regard to amendments to the Pensions Bill [*Lords*] with particular reference to proposals for nominated trustees as representatives of pensioners. [21833]

**Mr. Arbuthnot:** All Government Ministers meet hon. Members from time to time to discuss a wide range of issues.

### Social Development

**Ms Corston:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will issue a Green Paper to assist his Department to fulfil the Government's agreement to commitment 2f of the world summit for social development; [22270]

(2) if he will issue a consultative document, following the world summit for social development, on the co-ordination of national and international definitions required by every country to plan for the eradication of absolute poverty and reduce overall poverty. [22268]

**Mr. Burt:** The Department will reflect in its wide range of programmes and initiatives, agreements reached at the UN world summit for social development. Details of expenditure plans, targets and objectives for the social security programme are published in the Department's annual report.

The UN world summit for social development recognised that national indictors of poverty and vulnerability should be developed in the light of national circumstances. The Department already publishes statistical reports, analysis and research material on a wide range of aspects associated with low income in order to assist in the appropriate development of social policies.

### Recruitment

**Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, how many, and what proportion of vacancies advertised by his Department, and by each of his Department's agencies, in the last three years have listed the attainment of national vocational qualifications as an acceptable entry requirement; and, of those, how many have required (i) level 1 NVQs, (ii) Level 2 NVQs, (iii) level 3 NVQs and (iv) other level NVQs. [22978]

**Mr. Hague:** The Benefits Agency, Child Support Agency and Contributions Agency all accept NVQs as an acceptable entry requirement, although detailed

information in the form requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Other parts of the Department where recruitment has been more limited, are considering accepting NVQs for future recruitment exercises.

### Benefit Payment Card

**Mr. Dewar:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what he estimates in current cost terms will be the annual cost of administering and maintaining the benefit payment card system when fully operational. [23008]

**Mr. Arbuthnot:** The estimated gross running costs in the feasibility study were £77 million per annum before offsetting savings from phasing out the current system. Competitive proposals, including running costs, are now being sought from five potential prime contractors.

**Mr. Dewar:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many benefit payment cards he estimates will have to be issued if all benefit payments at post offices are to be automated; and if he will list the benefits involved and his estimate of the numbers of recipients involved with each benefit. [23004]

**Mr. Arbuthnot:** There are currently around 19,000,000 customers who choose to be paid their benefits at post offices. All of these will receive a card and all social security benefits payable by the DSS will be involved.

**Mr. Dewar:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he intends to issue the first benefit payment cards; and when he expects that all benefits payable at post offices will be included in the system. [23006]

**Mr. Arbuthnot:** The first benefit payment cards are expected to be issued in 1996 and the whole implementation process is expected to take up to three years.

**Mr. Dewar:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many post offices in the United Kingdom will be adopted for the use of benefit payment cards. [23005]

**Mr. Arbuthnot:** All post offices will be able to make benefit payments using the card.

**Mr. Dewar:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what will be the cost of issuing benefit payment cards to all recipients of DSS benefits receiving payment through post offices, including the costs of installing equipment in the post offices concerned. [23003]

**Mr. Arbuthnot:** The feasibility study estimated set up costs to be £135 million. Competitive proposals, including set up costs, are now being sought from five potential contractors.

### Housing Benefit

**Mr. George Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide, for each district and metropolitan borough council in England and Wales, for each available year since 1991-92, *(a)* a breakdown of the numbers of housing benefit claimants, split into rent rebate and rent allowance categories and the total amounts paid under each heading, *(b)* the numbers and amount of housing benefit backdated payments, regulation 72(15) and the amount paid as a percentage of each local authority's housing benefit expenditure, *(c)* the number, amount and percentage of amount in relation to total housing benefit expenditure in relation to discretionary payments, regulation 69(8) revised to regulation 61(2) and *(d)* the numbers and amounts of each category of housing benefit overpayment and the amount as a percentage of the authority's overall housing benefit expenditure. [23172]

**Mr. Roger Evans:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood) on 23 February, *Official Report*, column *283*.

### Historical Documents

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what special training is given to persons who have responsibility for assessing the historical significance of documents held by his Department. [23278]

**Mr. Hague:** Staff in the Department of Social Security who have responsibility for assessing the historical significance of documents are trained by the Public Record Office and by departmental staff already experienced in the work.

### Non-British Nationals

**Mr. Dicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many non-British nationals are currently claiming social security benefits; and what is the cost of the Exchequer of paying such benefit; [23416]

(2) how many non-European Union nationals are currently claiming social security benefits; and what is the cost to the Exchequer of paying such benefits. [23417]

**Mr. Hague:** The information requested is not available as nationality is not a condition of benefit entitlement.

### Correspondence

**Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects to reply to the letter dated 28 February from the hon. Member for South Hams about Mr. Lord McLeod of Murtwell cottage, Murtwell, Diptford, South Devon; what are the reasons for the delay in replying; and if he will make a statement. [23420]

**Mr. Burt:** I replied to the hon. Member on 4 May.

### Benefits: Capital Limits

**Mr. David Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list all the current capital limits to the entitlement to benefits and other assistance together with the year of introduction; what was the value of each in real terms at the time of the introduction; and if he will make a statement. [16611]

**Mr. Roger Evans** *[pursuant to his reply 30 March, Official Report, column 779]:* The information regarding the Social Fund capital limit for funeral and maternity payments, up to age 60, was incorrect. The correct information is as follows:

The five income-related benefits—council tax benefit, disability working allowance, family credit, housing benefit and income support—all have a lower capital limit, above which deductions are made from benefit, and an upper capital limit, above which no benefit can be paid. The lower capital limit in all those benefits is also the level above which no personal allowance can be paid for a dependent child if he possesses that amount of capital or more.

Additionally, in qualifying for a social fund maternity or funeral payment, community care grant or budgeting

loan, if capital is held above a certain limit, deductions are made from any payments awarded.

The limits and the dates when they were introduced or last increased are set out in the table.

| | Date fixed | Value now if uprated in line with prices[1] £ |
|---|---|---|
| *Council Tax Benefit* | | |
| Lower capital limit £3,000 | April 1993 | 3,108 |
| Upper capital limit £16,000 | April 1983 | 16,576 |
| *Disability Working Allowance* | | |
| Lower capital limit £3,000 | April 1992 | 3,216 |
| Upper capital limit £16,000 | April 1992 | 3,216 |
| *Family Credit* | | |
| Lower capital limit £3,000 | April 1988 | 4,105 |
| Upper capital limit £8,000 | April 1990 | 9,940 |
| *Housing Benefit* | | |
| Lower capital limit £3,000 | April 1988 | 4,105 |
| Upper capital limit £16,000 | April 1990 | 9,940 |
| *Income Support* | | |
| Lower capital limit £3,000 | April 1988 | 4,105 |
| Upper capital limit £8,000 | April 1990 | 9,940 |
| *Social Fund* | | |
| Capital limit for funeral £500 or maternity payments (up to age 60) | April 1987 | 697 |
| Capital limit for funeral £1,000 or maternity payments (60 or over) | April 1990 | 1,242 |
| Community Care Grants £500 (up to age 60) | April 1988 | 684 |
| Community Care Grant £1,000 (60 and over) | April 1988 | 1,242 |
| Budget Loan £500 (up to age 60) | April 1988 | 684 |
| Budgeting Loan £1,000 (60 and over) | April 1988 | 1,242 |

[1] Uprated in line with ROSSI—retail prices index excluding housing costs.

## ATTORNEY-GENERAL

### Crown Prosecution Service

**Mr. Straw:** To ask the Attorney General (1) how many cases were discontinued by the Crown Prosecution Service in 1994–95;

(2) what was the total number of cases *(a)* received by magistrates courts and *(b)* finalised in magistrates courts for every year since 1987–88;

(3) how many cases were *(a)* received by the Crown Prosecution Service from the police, *(b)* completed in the magistrates court, *(c)* discontinued by the Crown Prosecution Service before or at the magistrates court hearing, *(d)* committed to the Crown Court by the magistrates court or *(e)* otherwise disposed of in each Crown Prosecution Service region in total for every year since 1987–88.

**The Attorney-General:** The following tables show the number of defendants' cases dealt with by the Crown Prosecution Service in the magistrates courts since April 1987. Tables 1 to 6 show figures for the original 31 areas of the CPS, while tables 7 to 8 show figures for the present 13 areas. The figures do not include the specialised casework undertaken by CPS headquarters.

The number received comprises all those forwarded to the CPS by the police during each period, and the number finalised comprises all those completed during the period. Both totals include cases forwarded to the CPS for pre-charge advice only, and the number of these is specified for each year.

Also included in the totals received and finalised are a number of non-criminal proceedings, such as forfeiture proceedings under section 3 of the Obscene Publications Act. A separate count of these has been kept since April 1991, and is shown as "other proceedings" for the years 1991–1992 onwards.

The tables show the number completed in the magistrates courts, comprising all those defendants whose case was finalised by way of trial or guilty plea.

Cases discontinued comprise all those defendants whose case was dropped by the CPS, whether in advance of the hearing or at court.

Cases committed comprise all those committed for trial in the Crown Court during the period.

Other disposals comprise the remaining cases: committal hearings in which the defendant was discharged, cases where the defendant was bound over to keep the peace without a trial having taken place, instances where the defendant could not be found, and other cases where the prosecution could not proceed, for example because the defendant had died.

*Table 1: Magistrates' Courts cases 1987–88*

| | Received (October 1987 to March 1988 only) | Finalised | Of which | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Advice only | Completed in Magistrates' Courts | Discontinued | Committed to Crown Court | Other disposals |
| Inner London | 92,761 | 172,251 | 1,825 | 111,506 | 7,208 | 16,162 | 35,550 |
| London North | 41,369 | 75,557 | 1,425 | 46,379 | 4,895 | 8,709 | 14,149 |
| London South | 35,900 | 67,720 | 1,670 | 50,677 | 5,749 | 6,236 | 3,388 |
| Avon/Somerset | 18,373 | 35,649 | 1,234 | 28,099 | 2,138 | 3,417 | 761 |
| Herts/Beds. | 16,029 | 28,091 | 1,465 | 21,441 | 1,942 | 2,239 | 1,004 |
| Cambridge/Lincs. | 14,791 | 28,914 | 916 | 23,182 | 1,783 | 2,396 | 637 |
| Cheshire | 11,849 | 24,956 | 1,423 | 19,248 | 1,754 | 1,795 | 736 |
| Cleveland/North Yorks. | 18,808 | 37,889 | 3,554 | 27,296 | 2,390 | 3,024 | 1,625 |
| Cumbria/Lancs. | 31,247 | 64,617 | 12,125 | 41,663 | 4,430 | 4,773 | 1,626 |
| Derbyshire | 13,666 | 29,377 | 730 | 24,390 | 1,789 | 1,977 | 491 |
| Devon/Cornwall | 16,433 | 31,040 | 2,409 | 23,336 | 2,837 | 2,211 | 247 |
| Dorset/Hants. | 26,960 | 51,736 | 1,663 | 40,369 | 4,113 | 4,753 | 838 |
| Durham/Northumbria | 33,070 | 62,742 | 2,124 | 41,703 | 4,659 | 7,030 | 7,226 |

*Table 1: Magistrates' Courts cases 1987–88*

| | Received (October 1987 to March 1988 only) | Finalised | Of which | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Advice only | Completed in Magistrates' Courts | Discontinued | Committed to Crown Court | Other disposals |
| North Wales | 16,263 | 29,036 | 1,069 | 23,534 | 2,249 | 1,425 | 759 |
| Essex | 14,671 | 27,554 | 223 | 21,299 | 2,908 | 2,311 | 813 |
| Glos/Wilts. | 14,090 | 27,237 | 633 | 21,677 | 2,299 | 1,858 | 770 |
| Gt. Manchester | 46,451 | 82,736 | 689 | 64,604 | 6,249 | 8,565 | 2,629 |
| Gwent/South Wales | 37,610 | 70,943 | 2,023 | 55,724 | 7,010 | 4,315 | 1,871 |
| Humberside | 11,753 | 25,095 | 1,049 | 18,483 | 1,019 | 3,421 | 1,123 |
| Kent | 17,872 | 37,448 | 997 | 28,444 | 3,798 | 3,423 | 786 |
| Leicester/Northants | 21,223 | 36,919 | 607 | 28,012 | 3,018 | 3,471 | 1,811 |
| Merseyside | 25,296 | 48,442 | 821 | 35,456 | 4,415 | 5,460 | 2,290 |
| Norfolk/Suffolk | 18,656 | 36,066 | 2,510 | 27,698 | 2,578 | 1,952 | 1,328 |
| Nottinghamshire | 17,560 | 37,200 | 843 | 33,064 | 890 | 2,955 | (552) |
| South Yorkshire | 19,933 | 36,511 | 1,624 | 26,610 | 2,483 | 4,207 | 1,587 |
| Staffs/Warwick. | 19,934 | 37,446 | 2,196 | 28,461 | 2,937 | 2,788 | 1,064 |
| Sussex | 20,242 | 41,593 | 1,791 | 32,375 | 4,622 | 2,289 | 516 |
| Thames Valley | 26,708 | 45,981 | 3,110 | 36,271 | 2,584 | 3,008 | 1,008 |
| West Mercia | 12,877 | 27,148 | 1,163 | 20,352 | 2,052 | 2,269 | 1,312 |
| West Midlands | 38,060 | 70,346 | 2,210 | 53,333 | 2,453 | 8,900 | 3,450 |
| West Yorkshire | 35,878 | 72,732 | 639 | 52,799 | 9,649 | 7,584 | 2,061 |
| Total field | 786,333 | 1,500,972 | 56,760 | 1,107,485 | 108,900 | 134,923 | 92,904 |

*Other disposals* comprise committal hearings in which the defendant was discharged, cases where the defendant was bound over to keep the peace, instances where the defendant cannot be found, and other cases where the prosecution cannot proceed (e.g. through the death of the defendant). The minus value for Other Disposals in the Nottinghamshire Area is produced because the sum of advice only, completed, discontinued and committed to the Crown Court cases is greater than the total number of cases recorded as finalised. This result is produced because of limitations in administrative arrangements for obtaining the basic data in the Area at that time. The occurrence of such circumstances is now avoided by validity checks and controls which have since been introduced.

*Table 2: Magistrates' Courts cases 1988–89*

| | Received | Finalised | Of which | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Advice only | Completed in Magistrates' Courts | Discontinued | Committed to Crown Court | Other disposals |
| Inner London | 176,686 | 169,844 | 1,263 | 107,070 | 10,683 | 16,073 | 34,755 |
| London North | 83,399 | 74,351 | 1,363 | 47,041 | 5,978 | 9,321 | 10,648 |
| London South | 73,715 | 73,877 | 1,712 | 52,558 | 6,839 | 6,036 | 6,732 |
| Avon/Somerset | 38,258 | 37,629 | 1,065 | 29,775 | 2,573 | 3,076 | 1,140 |
| Hert/Beds | 32,735 | 31,600 | 1,946 | 24,167 | 2,211 | 2,612 | 664 |
| Cambridge/Lincs. | 28,438 | 25,930 | 1,132 | 19,565 | 1,864 | 2,419 | 950 |
| Cheshire | 24,291 | 23,850 | 1,093 | 18,400 | 2,055 | 1,951 | 351 |
| Cleveland/North Yorks | 38,637 | 35,958 | 2,327 | 26,500 | 2,435 | 3,271 | 1,425 |
| Cumbria/Lancs. | 57,891 | 58,937 | 7,310 | 41,361 | 3,648 | 5,079 | 1,539 |
| Derbyshire | 24,487 | 24,510 | 2,418 | 18,014 | 1,653 | 2,147 | 278 |
| Devon/Cornwall | 31,393 | 31,521 | 2,510 | 23,457 | 2,419 | 1,875 | 1,260 |
| Dorset/Hants | 59,983 | 57,588 | 1,474 | 46,198 | 3,759 | 4,660 | 1,497 |
| Durham/Northumbria | 67,852 | 64,376 | 2,827 | 41,463 | 5,778 | 6,476 | 7,832 |
| North Wales | 32,068 | 30,284 | 1,038 | 24,273 | 2,793 | 1,558 | 622 |
| Essex | 30,179 | 30,193 | 469 | 21,549 | 3,572 | 2,433 | 2,170 |
| Glos/Wilts | 25,960 | 26,156 | 884 | 20,321 | 2,492 | 1,731 | 728 |
| Gt. Manchester | 94,678 | 89,938 | 2,209 | 68,370 | 8,207 | 8,622 | 2,530 |
| Gwent/South Wales | 72,264 | 70,254 | 2,361 | 53,192 | 7,307 | 4,325 | 3,069 |
| Humberside | 27,276 | 26,591 | 1,320 | 19,309 | 1,715 | 3,458 | 789 |
| Kent | 34,392 | 34,807 | 1,116 | 26,216 | 3,719 | 2,999 | 757 |
| Leicester/Northants | 38,384 | 35,616 | 1,022 | 28,046 | 3,186 | 2,487 | 875 |
| Merseyside | 51,872 | 50,438 | 815 | 38,133 | 4,419 | 5,225 | 1,846 |
| Norfolk/Suffolk | 37,690 | 37,247 | 3,075 | 29,091 | 2,660 | 2,284 | 137 |
| Nottinghamshire | 38,507 | 36,464 | 618 | 30,304 | 956 | 3,324 | 1,262 |
| South Yorkshire | 44,934 | 41,685 | 5,045 | 28,502 | 2,866 | 4,101 | 1,171 |
| Staffs/Warwick | 40,008 | 38,935 | 1,897 | 29,351 | 3,236 | 3,012 | 1,439 |
| Sussex | 34,598 | 34,527 | 2,480 | 24,671 | 2,385 | 2,456 | 2,535 |
| Thames Valley | 48,547 | 45,479 | 3,189 | 34,056 | 2,748 | 3,051 | 2,435 |
| West Mercia | 26,777 | 25,946 | 932 | 20,567 | 2,241 | 1,787 | 419 |
| West Midlands | 79,276 | 77,450 | 2,125 | 61,123 | 3,029 | 8,526 | 2,647 |
| West Yorkshire | 78,941 | 66,367 | 603 | 45,877 | 11,288 | 7,352 | 1,247 |
| Total field | 1,574,116 | 1,508,348 | 59,638 | 1,098,520 | 120,714 | 133,727 | 95,749 |

*Other disposals* comprise committal hearings in which the defendant was discharged, cases where the defendant was bound over to keep the peace, instances where the defendant cannot be found, and other cases where the prosecution cannot proceed (e.g. through the death of the defendant).

*Table 3: Magistrates' Courts cases 1989–90*

| | Received | Finalised | Of which | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Advice only | Completed in Magistrates' Courts | Discontinued | Committed to Crown Court | Other disposals |
| Inner London | 166,374 | 169,577 | 2,522 | 105,622 | 12,756 | 16,497 | 32,180 |
| London North | 82,137 | 73,167 | 1,920 | 46,689 | 7,236 | 8,484 | 8,838 |
| London South | 67,902 | 71,849 | 1,816 | 48,947 | 6,925 | 5,757 | 8,404 |
| Avon/Somerset | 37,910 | 38,190 | 1,225 | 29,238 | 2,965 | 2,918 | 1,844 |
| Herts/Beds | 32,376 | 32,535 | 1,851 | 23,836 | 2,694 | 2,565 | 1,589 |
| Cambridge/Lincs. | 32,495 | 30,527 | 1,020 | 23,591 | 2,410 | 2,559 | 947 |
| Cheshire | 25,452 | 24,749 | 1,143 | 18,664 | 2,369 | 1,978 | 595 |
| Cleveland/North Yorkshire | 36,699 | 36,378 | 2,964 | 25,802 | 2,816 | 3,272 | 1,524 |
| Cumbria/Lancs. | 61,369 | 58,902 | 2,924 | 44,422 | 4,555 | 5,272 | 1,729 |
| Derbyshire | 26,755 | 25,840 | 4,264 | 17,096 | 1,798 | 2,282 | 400 |
| Devon/Cornwall | 34,051 | 33,937 | 2,320 | 25,240 | 2,518 | 2,606 | 1,253 |
| Dorset/Hants | 63,602 | 61,892 | 1,853 | 48,706 | 3,826 | 5,098 | 2,409 |
| Durhan/Northumbria | 68,322 | 65,455 | 2,441 | 42,777 | 7,602 | 5,141 | 7,494 |
| North Wales | 34,621 | 32,937 | 865 | 26,121 | 3,477 | 1,597 | 877 |
| Essex | 34,542 | 34,109 | 176 | 24,359 | 4,592 | 2,432 | 2,550 |
| Glos/Wilts | 28,221 | 27,270 | 840 | 20,857 | 2,989 | 1,626 | 958 |
| Gt. Manchester | 101,713 | 98,186 | 3,099 | 74,557 | 9,143 | 7,756 | 3,631 |
| Gwent/South Wales | 76,175 | 71,402 | 3,721 | 52,209 | 8,311 | 4,787 | 2,374 |
| Humberside | 26,797 | 26,430 | 1,223 | 19,343 | 2,047 | 3,059 | 758 |
| Kent | 36,291 | 36,180 | 1,253 | 26,921 | 4,081 | 3,193 | 732 |
| Leicester/Northants | 36,756 | 33,427 | 797 | 24,999 | 3,186 | 2,812 | 1,633 |
| Merseyside | 60,932 | 56,517 | 841 | 43,944 | 4,324 | 4,896 | 2,512 |
| Norfolk/Suffolk | 39,843 | 38,450 | 2,885 | 29,984 | 2,702 | 2,595 | 284 |
| Nottinghamshire | 41,323 | 39,371 | 894 | 32,848 | 1,674 | 2,811 | 1,144 |
| South Yorkshire | 48,632 | 46,277 | 5,669 | 31,325 | 3,468 | 4,188 | 1,627 |
| Staffs/Warwick | 45,379 | 43,401 | 1,665 | 32,672 | 3,878 | 3,420 | 1,766 |
| Sussex | 36,267 | 35,364 | 1,641 | 25,567 | 2,737 | 2,562 | 2,857 |
| Thames Valley | 49,572 | 49,830 | 2,331 | 32,833 | 2,726 | 2,700 | 9,240 |
| West Mercia | 26,363 | 26,149 | 932 | 20,558 | 2,568 | 1,825 | 266 |
| West Midlands | 80,785 | 77,601 | 1,806 | 59,803 | 4,621 | 8,586 | 2,785 |
| West Yorkshire | 82,691 | 79,148 | 5,223 | 50,850 | 13,319 | 7,473 | 2,283 |
| Total field | 1,622,347 | 1,575,047 | 64,124 | 1,130,380 | 140,313 | 132,747 | 107,483 |

*Other disposals* comprise committal hearings in which the defendant was discharged, cases where the defendant was bound over to keep the peace, instances where the defendant cannot be found, and other cases where the prosecution cannot proceed (e.g. through the death of the defendant).

*Table 4: Magistrates' Courts cases 1990–91*

| | Received | Finalised | Of which | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Advice only | Completed in Magistrates' Courts | Discontinued | Committed to Crown Court | Other disposals |
| Inner London | 149,066 | 154,355 | 2,518 | 90,613 | 12,507 | 15,997 | 32,720 |
| London North | 79,181 | 80,764 | 2,260 | 48,806 | 8,350 | 8,274 | 13,074 |
| London South | 65,872 | 65,781 | 1,882 | 43,195 | 6,775 | 6,121 | 7,808 |
| Avon/Somerset | 37,379 | 37,139 | 1,247 | 28,560 | 3,295 | 2,667 | 1,370 |
| Herts/Beds | 32,858 | 34,002 | 1,731 | 23,002 | 3,018 | 2,032 | 4,219 |
| Cambridge/Lincs. | 31,521 | 30,363 | 1,090 | 22,933 | 2,906 | 2,689 | 745 |
| Cheshire | 25,526 | 24,440 | 1,055 | 18,491 | 2,423 | 1,921 | 550 |
| Cleveland/North Yorks | 38,070 | 36,286 | 2,119 | 25,948 | 3,117 | 3,612 | 1,490 |
| Cumbria/Lancs. | 63,795 | 59,425 | 1,946 | 43,834 | 5,118 | 6,184 | 2,343 |
| Derbyshire | 24,356 | 23,549 | 2,517 | 16,410 | 1,743 | 2,190 | 689 |
| Devon/Cornwall | 33,629 | 33,169 | 1,797 | 25,139 | 2,730 | 2,618 | 885 |
| Dorset/Hants | 62,045 | 61,971 | 1,180 | 48,603 | 3,784 | 5,531 | 2,873 |
| Durham/Northumbria | 73,573 | 71,632 | 2,725 | 46,092 | 9,319 | 5,425 | 8,071 |
| North Wales | 37,353 | 35,587 | 708 | 28,531 | 3,983 | 1,752 | 613 |
| Essex | 37,378 | 37,346 | 561 | 22,638 | 4,828 | 2,642 | 6,677 |
| Glos/Wilts | 29,938 | 29,526 | 722 | 22,400 | 3,637 | 1,923 | 844 |
| Gt. Manchester | 103,485 | 98,847 | 3,242 | 77,492 | 9,226 | 7,323 | 1,564 |
| Gwent/South Wales | 80,708 | 80,575 | 4,135 | 58,331 | 8,910 | 5,246 | 3,953 |
| Humberside | 27,952 | 27,283 | 1,407 | 19,269 | 1,999 | 3,282 | 1,326 |
| Kent | 33,685 | 34,183 | 1,276 | 24,030 | 4,844 | 3,266 | 767 |
| Leicester/Northants | 36,957 | 38,676 | 922 | 28,211 | 4,128 | 2,870 | 2,545 |
| Merseyside | 61,576 | 58,631 | 671 | 44,591 | 5,236 | 4,800 | 3,333 |
| Norfolk/Suffolk | 38,674 | 37,232 | 3,453 | 26,968 | 3,142 | 2,561 | 1,108 |
| Nottinghamshire | 41,615 | 42,852 | 589 | 35,018 | 1,632 | 2,827 | 2,786 |
| South Yorkshire | 51,699 | 53,383 | 5,518 | 37,773 | 3,991 | 4,345 | 1,756 |
| Staffs/Warwick | 44,463 | 43,132 | 1,674 | 31,393 | 4,048 | 3,410 | 2,607 |
| Sussex | 35,943 | 35,466 | 1,572 | 25,590 | 2,627 | 2,899 | 2,778 |
| Thames Valley | 48,018 | 49,072 | 2,346 | 33,314 | 3,915 | 2,990 | 6,507 |

*Table 4: Magistrates' Courts cases 1990–91*

| | Received | Finalised | Of which | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Advice only | Completed in Magistrates' Courts | Discontinued | Committed to Crown Court | Other disposals |
| West Mercia | 27,241 | 26,392 | 1,175 | 20,510 | 2,511 | 1,959 | 237 |
| West Midlands | 78,970 | 80,803 | 1,272 | 62,133 | 5,146 | 8,025 | 4,227 |
| West Yorkshire | 92,531 | 90,567 | 17,441 | 50,491 | 12,348 | 7,306 | 2,981 |
| Total field | 1,625,057 | 1,612,429 | 72,751 | 1,130,309 | 151,236 | 134,687 | 123,446 |

*Other disposals* comprise committal hearings in which the defendant was discharged, cases where the defendant was bound over to keep the peace, instances where the defendant cannot be found, and other cases where the prosecution cannot proceed (e.g. through the death of the defendant).

*Table 5: Magistrates' Courts cases 1991–92*

| | Received | Finalised | of which | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Advice only | Completed in Magistrates' Courts | Discontinued | Committed to Crown Court | Other disposals | Other proceedings |
| Inner London | 147,693 | 145,829 | 2,421 | 85,120 | 19,029 | 14,383 | 23,867 | 1,009 |
| London North | 79,637 | 74,897 | 2,233 | 47,219 | 11,778 | 7,480 | 5,307 | 880 |
| London South | 60,768 | 60,537 | 1,932 | 39,940 | 7,674 | 5,609 | 4,961 | 421 |
| Avon/Somerset | 36,472 | 36,832 | 1,074 | 25,461 | 4,550 | 3,042 | 2,174 | 531 |
| Herts/Beds | 31,273 | 33,392 | 2,272 | 20,148 | 4,228 | 1,597 | 4,383 | 764 |
| Cambridge/Lincs. | 29,788 | 28,562 | 1,311 | 20,291 | 3,142 | 2,668 | 908 | 242 |
| Cheshire | 24,766 | 24,901 | 849 | 17,792 | 2,701 | 2,050 | 850 | 652 |
| Cleveland/North Yorks | 39,989 | 39,471 | 1,686 | 25,401 | 4,371 | 3,865 | 2,149 | 2,000 |
| Cumbria/Lancs. | 61,855 | 61,726 | 2,428 | 43,100 | 5,914 | 6,293 | 3,625 | 366 |
| Derbyshire | 24,801 | 25,054 | 4,031 | 14,984 | 1,595 | 1,958 | 2,144 | 343 |
| Devon/Cornwall | 33,194 | 34,170 | 1,297 | 25,541 | 2,747 | 2,271 | 1,898 | 416 |
| Dorset/Hants | 63,300 | 65,363 | 1,524 | 49,598 | 4,862 | 5,135 | 3,497 | 747 |
| Durham/Northumbria | 67,866 | 66,196 | 2,235 | 44,431 | 9,825 | 5,575 | 3,561 | 569 |
| North Wales | 38,774 | 37,161 | 810 | 28,426 | 3,693 | 1,670 | 2,028 | 534 |
| Essex | 41,888 | 38,387 | 1,454 | 27,537 | 3,333 | 2,410 | 3,319 | 414 |
| Glos/Wilts | 32,823 | 32,991 | 964 | 23,292 | 3,826 | 1,818 | 2,570 | 521 |
| Gt. Manchester | 102,983 | 102,507 | 2,624 | 71,969 | 9,904 | 7,818 | 6,410 | 3,782 |
| Gwent/South Wales | 76,878 | 76,416 | 4,147 | 53,035 | 8,648 | 5,089 | 4,262 | 1,235 |
| Humberside | 26,238 | 26,158 | 1,557 | 17,702 | 1,792 | 3,109 | 743 | 1,255 |
| Kent | 29,179 | 29,907 | 1,072 | 19,502 | 4,848 | 3,025 | 1,182 | 278 |
| Leicester/Northants | 37,856 | 42,023 | 1,288 | 28,766 | 3,807 | 3,162 | 4,537 | 1,046 |
| Merseyside | 56,711 | 61,230 | 762 | 44,812 | 6,428 | 5,321 | 3,453 | 454 |
| Norfolk/Suffolk | 38,188 | 38,695 | 3,254 | 27,715 | 3,434 | 2,706 | 1,200 | 384 |
| Nottinghamshire | 28,302 | 32,536 | 577 | 22,977 | 4,339 | 2,482 | 1,767 | 394 |
| South Yorkshire | 43,538 | 47,227 | 5,317 | 28,105 | 4,652 | 4,322 | 4,343 | 197 |
| Staffs/Warwick | 45,059 | 45,261 | 2,068 | 32,713 | 4,643 | 3,404 | 1,696 | 737 |
| Sussex | 36,194 | 36,320 | 1,878 | 25,557 | 3,664 | 2,709 | 2,145 | 366 |
| Thames Valley | 41,994 | 41,889 | 2,342 | 28,095 | 5,717 | 2,810 | 2,394 | 530 |
| West Mercia | 25,094 | 26,379 | 1,748 | 18,444 | 2,829 | 1,652 | 1,310 | 359 |
| West Midlands | 77,827 | 70,992 | 709 | 50,197 | 7,984 | 7,028 | 4,184 | 890 |
| West Yorkshire | 90,247 | 85,844 | 15,473 | 50,877 | 8,454 | 7,206 | 3,408 | 436 |
| Total field | 1,571,175 | 1,568,853 | 73,337 | 1,058,747 | 174,411 | 129,667 | 110,275 | 22,752 |

*Other disposals* comprise committal hearings in which the defendant was discharged, cases where the defendant was bound over to keep the peace, instances where the defendant cannot be found, and other cases where the prosecution cannot proceed (e.g. through the death of the defendant).

*Other proceedings* comprise non-criminal proceedings, such as forfeiture hearings under Section 3 of the Obscene Publications Act. Figures for these proceedings are only available as from April 1991.

*Table 6: Magistrates' Courts cases 1992–93*

| | Received | Finalised | of which | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Advice only | Completed in Magistrates' Courts | Discontinued | Committed to Crown Court | Other disposals | Other proceedings |
| Inner London | 146,480 | 148,352 | 2,749 | 80,785 | 22,538 | 11,440 | 29,075 | 1,765 |
| London North | 76,838 | 73,918 | 3,781 | 44,749 | 12,284 | 5,556 | 6,498 | 1,050 |
| London South | 58,390 | 58,182 | 2,322 | 37,363 | 8,481 | 4,720 | 4,845 | 451 |
| Avon/Somerset | 34,379 | 34,049 | 1,283 | 22,485 | 4,549 | 2,650 | 2,611 | 471 |
| Herts/Beds | 30,415 | 30,408 | 1,814 | 19,159 | 3,881 | 1,787 | 2,757 | 1,010 |
| Cambridge/Lincs. | 31,326 | 28,325 | 1,669 | 20,255 | 3,328 | 2,173 | 720 | 180 |
| Cheshire | 26,300 | 25,749 | 1,478 | 17,752 | 2,653 | 1,976 | 951 | 939 |
| Cleveland/North Yorks | 40,663 | 40,418 | 2,135 | 26,210 | 5,480 | 3,655 | 1,636 | 1,302 |

*Table 6: Magistrates' Courts cases 1992–93*

| | Received | Finalised | of which | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Advice only | Completed in Magistrates' Courts | Discontinued | Committed to Crown Court | Other disposals | Other proceedings |
| Cumbria/Lancs. | 62,616 | 61,486 | 2,398 | 43,497 | 6,625 | 5,097 | 3,281 | 588 |
| Derbyshire | 23,285 | 23,613 | 3,967 | 14,200 | 2,062 | 1,711 | 1,386 | 287 |
| Devon/Cornwall | 30,174 | 30,985 | 1,428 | 23,106 | 2,659 | 2,026 | 1,394 | 372 |
| Dorset/Hants | 58,043 | 59,271 | 1,750 | 43,874 | 4,724 | 3,913 | 4,330 | 680 |
| Durham/Northumbria | 68,353 | 69,382 | 2,151 | 44,856 | 12,478 | 4,748 | 4,656 | 493 |
| North Wales | 36,250 | 36,436 | 1,218 | 27,077 | 4,175 | 1,665 | 1,757 | 544 |
| Essex | 39,869 | 41,670 | 2,030 | 28,385 | 3,064 | 1,974 | 6,065 | 152 |
| Glos/Wilts | 33,417 | 33,434 | 1,168 | 22,858 | 3,835 | 1,496 | 3,014 | 1,063 |
| Gt. Manchester | 105,716 | 103,350 | 2,382 | 71,911 | 10,541 | 7,568 | 6,202 | 4,746 |
| Gwent/South Wales | 75,537 | 77,529 | 5,083 | 50,273 | 9,395 | 4,684 | 6,647 | 1,447 |
| Humberside | 24,139 | 24,042 | 1,382 | 16,536 | 1,949 | 2,320 | 379 | 1,476 |
| Kent | 28,463 | 27,643 | 1,125 | 17,907 | 4,865 | 2,366 | 1,156 | 224 |
| Leicester/Northants | 38,202 | 40,406 | 2,334 | 26,174 | 4,773 | 3,104 | 2,973 | 1,048 |
| Merseyside | 54,586 | 56,090 | 1,099 | 41,584 | 5,960 | 4,835 | 2,238 | 374 |
| Norfolk/Suffolk | 36,760 | 37,951 | 3,484 | 26,610 | 3,156 | 2,244 | 1,651 | 806 |
| Nottinghamshire | 27,794 | 28,837 | 523 | 19,876 | 4,083 | 2,530 | 1,501 | 324 |
| South Yorkshire | 39,155 | 39,885 | 5,257 | 22,839 | 6,342 | 3,106 | 2,049 | 292 |
| Staffs/Warwick | 46,806 | 45,895 | 2,741 | 33,027 | 4,981 | 2,872 | 1,383 | 891 |
| Sussex | 32,739 | 32,186 | 1,719 | 22,082 | 4,011 | 2,049 | 2,038 | 287 |
| Thames Valley | 45,320 | 45,489 | 3,108 | 28,714 | 6,201 | 2,449 | 4,231 | 786 |
| West Mercia | 27,614 | 26,977 | 1,198 | 19,200 | 3,833 | 1,544 | 908 | 294 |
| West Midlands | 76,593 | 74,305 | 1,545 | 48,616 | 9,986 | 6,524 | 6,095 | 1,539 |
| West Yorkshire | 74,364 | 76,249 | 6,228 | 48,403 | 10,882 | 7,300 | 3,212 | 224 |
| Total field | 1,530,586 | 1,532,512 | 72,549 | 1,010,363 | 193,774 | 112,082 | 117,639 | 26,105 |

*Other disposals* comprise committal hearings in which the defendant was discharged, cases where the defendant was bound over to keep the peace, instances where the defendant cannot be found, and other cases where the prosecution cannot proceed (e.g. through the death of the defendant).

*Other proceedings* comprise non-criminal proceedings, such as forfeiture hearings under Section 3 of the Obscene Publications Act. Figures for these proceedings are only available as from April 1991.

*Table 7: Magistrates' Courts cases 1993–94*

| | Received | Finalised | of which | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Advice only | Complete in Magistrates' Courts | Discontinued | Committed to Crown Court | Other disposals | Other proceedings |
| North | 101,284 | 101,576 | 4,094 | 68,218 | 13,769 | 7,246 | 6,773 | 1,476 |
| Yorkshire | 82,460 | 80,857 | 3,652 | 52,919 | 11,860 | 7,844 | 3,832 | 750 |
| Mersey/Lancashire | 90,333 | 89,546 | 3,014 | 62,982 | 8,971 | 8,815 | 4,851 | 913 |
| Humber | 73,500 | 71,386 | 7,268 | 46,360 | 7,988 | 5,673 | 2,226 | 1,871 |
| North West | 126,665 | 123,766 | 3,388 | 87,454 | 11,681 | 9,002 | 6,177 | 6,064 |
| East Midlands | 89,898 | 88,417 | 6,608 | 58,080 | 10,962 | 6,097 | 5,118 | 1,552 |
| Wales | 103,183 | 111,736 | 6,298 | 69,190 | 11,119 | 5,764 | 17,111 | 2,254 |
| Midlands | 115,623 | 117,330 | 5,443 | 74,001 | 13,503 | 8,426 | 13,755 | 2,202 |
| Anglia | 114,784 | 112,429 | 9,468 | 76,544 | 9,831 | 6,787 | 7,735 | 2,064 |
| Severn/Thames | 96,695 | 97,602 | 4,934 | 65,642 | 11,422 | 4,875 | 8,825 | 1,904 |
| South West | 75,873 | 75,002 | 2,884 | 52,581 | 8,714 | 5,003 | 4,912 | 908 |
| London | 276,913 | 274,524 | 9,892 | 150,955 | 36,208 | 19,217 | 53,968 | 4,284 |
| South East | 112,085 | 110,068 | 5,203 | 76,127 | 12,679 | 7,800 | 7,404 | 855 |
| Total field | 1,459,296 | 1,454,239 | 72,146 | 941,053 | 168,707 | 102,549 | 142,687 | 27,097 |

*Other disposals* comprise committal hearings in which the defendant was discharged, cases where the defendant was bound over to keep the peace, instances where the defendant cannot be found, and other cases where the prosecution cannot proceed (e.g. through the death of the defendant).

*Other proceedings* comprise non-criminal proceedings, such as forfeiture hearings under Section 3 of the Obscene Publications Act. Figures for these proceedings are only available as from April 1991.

*Table 8: Magistrates' Courts cases 1994–95*

| | Received | Finalised | of which | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Advice only | Completed in Magistrates' Courts | Discontinued | Committed to Crown Court | Other disposals | Other proceedings |
| North | 95,234 | 101,009 | 4,237 | 66,296 | 12,962 | 6,864 | 8,869 | 1,781 |
| Yorkshire | 92,815 | 87,443 | 2,771 | 57,581 | 13,053 | 7,818 | 5,504 | 716 |
| Mersey/Lancashire | 86,393 | 91,155 | 3,854 | 61,132 | 7,682 | 8,127 | 9,073 | 1,287 |
| Humber | 74,192 | 76,460 | 6,903 | 47,634 | 8,438 | 6,127 | 5,616 | 1,742 |
| North West | 120,034 | 120,286 | 4,192 | 83,036 | 9,556 | 8,870 | 8,112 | 6,520 |
| East Midlands | 91,168 | 91,405 | 5,557 | 61,130 | 10,845 | 6,026 | 6,265 | 1,582 |

*Table 8: Magistrates' Courts cases 1994–95*

| | *Received* | *Finalised* | *of which* | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | *Advice only* | *Completed in Magistrates' Courts* | *Discontinued* | *Committed to Crown Court* | *Other disposals* | *Other proceedings* |
| Wales | 99,514 | 100,171 | 4,812 | 63,981 | 10,960 | 5,894 | 12,215 | 2,309 |
| Midlands | 113,850 | 118,324 | 4,834 | 70,583 | 11,849 | 8,498 | 19,986 | 2,574 |
| Anglia | 114,896 | 117,356 | 8,759 | 81,557 | 9,885 | 6,838 | 7,751 | 2,566 |
| Severn/Thames | 97,745 | 99,075 | 5,543 | 65,040 | 11,690 | 4,945 | 9,742 | 2,115 |
| South West | 76,579 | 77,340 | 3,671 | 52,815 | 8,870 | 5,060 | 5,993 | 966 |
| London | 269,283 | 287,158 | 11,411 | 159,157 | 35,294 | 20,190 | 57,558 | 3,548 |
| South East | 112,040 | 110,435 | 5,625 | 75,353 | 10,345 | 8,336 | 9,866 | 910 |
| Total field | 1,443,743 | 1,477,617 | 72,169 | 945,295 | 161,429 | 103,593 | 166,550 | 28,616 |

*Other disposals* comprise committal hearings in which the defendant was discharged, cases where the defendant was bound over to keep the peace, instances where the defendant cannot be found, and other cases where the prosecution cannot proceed (e.g. through the death of the defendant).

*Other proceedings* comprise non-criminal proceedings, such as forfeiture hearings under Section 3 of the Obscene Publications Act. Figures for these proceedings are only available as from April 1991.

## TRADE AND INDUSTRY

### Consumers' Rights

20. **Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will introduce legislation to enhance the rights and interests of consumers of services and products. [21961]

**Mr. Jonathan Evans:** The rights and interests of consumers of goods and services are best served by ensuring that there is an open competitive market. But we consider legislation where it is necessary and appropriate.

### Exports

21. **Mr. Booth:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he is taking to improve the participation of small firms in exporting. [21962]

**Mr. Ian Taylor:** The DTI and FCO overseas trade service already provides a comprehensive and high quality range of export assistance and advice, which is primarily of benefit to small and medium sized companies. In addition, support for small businesses is being greatly improved through business links partnerships. One of the objectives of business links is to encourage and help small and medium sized companies to develop effective export strategies.

23. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement about the trends in exports in 1995. [21964]

**Mr. Ian Taylor:** The outlook for exports in 1995 is excellent. The Confederation of British Industry reports that export orders are growing faster than ever before and that optimism amongst exporters is at its highest for a generation. The volume of exports has risen by 12½ per cent. over the last year.

### British Gas

22. **Mr. Chisholm:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he is making to British Gas about the level of consumer dissatisfaction with the service provided. [21963]

**Mr. Page:** I refer the hon. Gentleman to the oral answer that I gave earlier to the hon. Member for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Jones).

### Output

24. **Mr. Spring:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what has been the change in output per head in the past 12 months in *(a)* the manufacturing sector and *(b)* the economy as a whole. [21965]

**Mr. Eggar:** Output per head rose by 6 per cent. in manufacturing and 3½ per cent. in the economy as a whole during 1994.

### Late Payment of Invoices

25. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what action he proposes to take to discourage the late payment of invoices to small and medium-sized companies. [21966]

**Mr. Page:** In the 1994 White Paper, "Competitiveness—Helping Business to Win", the Government announced a number of practical measures to tackle the late payment of commercial debt. These measures included additional prompt payment requirements for Government Departments and their agencies, the development of proposals for a British standard for prompt payment, the implementation of proposals to require public companies to state their payment policies in their directors' reports, further changes to streamline and simplify court procedures and a review of the scope of the small claims procedure.

Work on the implementation of these measures is continuing.

### Counterfeit Goods

26. **Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the financial and other effects on United Kingdom manufacturing industry of the trade in counterfeit goods allegedly made in Britain. [21967]

**Mr. Ian Taylor:** The Government have not made their own assessment of the effects of the trade in counterfeit goods. They are, however, aware of industry estimates that, in 1993, over £300 million worth of counterfeit goods were in circulation in the United Kingdom. They are also aware of evidence of an increase in the amount of counterfeits which originate in the United Kingdom and trading standards officers and the police are being encouraged to pursue counterfeiters.

### Small Businesses

27. **Mr. Khabra:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations his Department has received from chanbers of commerce about his policies in respect of and the demand for the products and services of small businesses. [21968]

**Mr. Page:** My Department has regular contact with the Association of British Chambers of Commerce and individual chambers, and discussions with them frequently concern the valuable contribution made to our local economies by small businesses.

**Dr. John Cunningham:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the success rate of small businesses between 1985 and the present in *(a)* Cumbria, *(b)* the United Kingdom and *(c)* the European Union as a whole. [22734]

**Mr. Heseltine:** A measure of the success of the small business sector is shown by the growth in the number of VAT registered businesses. Allowing for the change in the VAT threshold in 1991, the number of VAT registered businesses in Cumbria rose by 7 per cent. between 1985 and 1993, the latest year for which figures are available. In the UK as a whole it rose by 14 per cent.

There are no equivalent figures for the European Union as a whole.

### BT Directory Inquiries

28. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many complaints the Office of Telecommunications has received in the past year concerning British Telecom's 192 number inquiry service; and if he will make a statement. [21969]

**Mr. Ian Taylor:** Oftel received 40 letters about BT's directory inquiries service in the year to 30 April.

### Traditional Industries, Leicester

29. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will take steps to assist the traditional industries of the city of Leicester. [21970]

**Mr. Page:** The Government are doing much to assist all industry, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises, in Leicester. Business link Leicestershire is now providing a valuable service to the local business community. My Department is providing funding of £725,000 to the business link which handled over 60,000 enquiries in the year from 1 March 1994. In addition, my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, Central (Sir P. Beresford), has recently confirmed that funding of £10.5 million will be available in the hon. and learned Member's own constituency through the city challenge programme.

### Inward Investment

30. **Mr. Nicholas Winterton:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on inward investment policy. [21971]

**Mr. Eggar:** The Government's economic policies and warm welcome for foreign investors has made the UK the preferred location in Europe for inward investment and I am determined that we should remain so. That is why we have strengthened the resources of the Invest in Britain Bureau.

### Nuclear Industry

31. **Mr. Alan W. William:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the future of Nuclear Electric and Scottish Nuclear. [21972]

**Mr. Eggar:** I refer the hon. Member to the statement that my right hon. Friend made to the House yesterday, *Official Report*, columns 563–65.

### Manufacturing Profits

32. **Mr. Wareing:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proportion of manufacturing industry's profits were reinvested in United Kingdom industry in 1994. [21973]

**Mr. Eggar:** In 1993, the latest year for which figures are available, investment in manufacturing industry accounted for almost half of the gross operating surplus of companies in this sector.

### Manufactured Goods

33. **Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the United Kingdom's balance of trade in manufactured goods in 1979 and in 1994. [21974]

**Mr. Needham:** In 1979, the United Kingdom had a surplus of £2.7 billion or 1.4 per cent. of GDP in manufactured trade. In 1994, there was a deficit of £7.5 billion or 1.1 per cent. of GDP.

### Insolvency Procedures

34. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions he has had regarding the creation of a legal framework whereby companies experiencing cash flow and insolvency problems are allowed time to trade out of their difficulties before being put into the hands of receivers; and if he will make a statement. [21976]

**Mr. Jonathan Evans:** There are already procedures in the insolvency legislation which can assist companies with such problems and there has been extensive discussion since my Department commenced a review of these in 1993. In April 1995 the Insolvency Service issued a further consultative document on proposals for a new company voluntary arrangement procedure. These proposals include a 28-day moratorium, binding on all creditors, which gives companies a breathing space during which to put together a rescue plan. It is also proposed that floating chargeholders give five working days notice before they can appoint an administrative receiver, to allow companies an opportunity to seek advice.

### International Competitiveness

36. **Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what recent assessment he has made of the United Kingdom's international competitiveness. [21979]

**Mr. Heseltine:** Last year, the Government set out the UK's competitive position in the White Paper, "Helping Business to Win". The Government plan to publish soon a second White Paper on competitiveness. This will report on progress over the last year, extend the analysis of the UK's competitiveness and bring forward new initiatives to help business to win.

### Newspapers

37. **Mr. Spellar:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received regarding carriage charges by news wholesalers to newsagents; and what action he has taken. [21980]

**Mr. Jonathan Evans:** I have recently received a number of representations from Members of Parliament on behalf of newsagents, regarding increased carriage charges. I have also received representations from the National Federation of Retail Newsagents.

In the Monopolies and Mergers Commission's 1993 report on newspapers the commission reached no adverse findings in relation to carriage charges. Accordingly, I have no power to act.

### Crown Post Offices

**Mrs. Roche:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement about the future of Crown post offices. [21977]

**Mr. Page:** The Post Office has a policy of converting Crown offices to agency status as and when suitable opportunities arise. The policy has advantages for customers—who have access to the full range of services but usually during longer hours and from more accessible premises—and for the network—which can offer clients a competitive service. For these reasons the Government support this policy. Its implementation is a matter for the Post Office.

### National Vocational Qualifications

**Mr. Barron:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many, and what proportion of, vacancies advertised by his Department, and by each of his Department's agencies, in the last three years have listed the attainment of NVQs as an acceptable entry requirement; and, of those, how many have required (i) level 1 NVQs, (ii) level 2 NVQs, (iii) level 3 NVQs and (iv) other level NVQs. [22975]

**Mr. Ian Taylor:** None of the vacancies advertised by my Department has listed NVQs as an entry qualification.

Of the Department's agencies, only the Radiocommunication Agency has advertised vacancies with NVQs listed as an acceptable entry requirement. It has advertised 20 posts—32 per cent. of total advertised vacancies—all requiring only level 1 NVQs.

### Military Training Assistance Scheme

**Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what has been the annual cost to his Department of the United Kingdom military training assistance scheme in each of the last five financial years. [23241]

**Mr. Ian Taylor:** The United Kingdom military training assistance scheme is funded and controlled by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and my Department bears no cost associated with the scheme.

### Business Links

**Mr. Fisher:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade, how many staff are employed in business link *(a)* at his Department in London and *(b)* in business link centres around the United Kingdom. [22294]

**Mr. Page:** Forty-eight staff in my Department in London are employed directly in business link development. In addition a large number are involved indirectly in respect of the activities of business link partner organisations and the integration of DTI funded services into business links.

My Department does not keep information on the numbers of staff employed by business links or those employed by, or located by partner organisations and co-located within business links.

**Mr. Fisher:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many inquiries for information were received by *(a)* business link and *(b)* the marketing information centre in the past 12 months. [22292]

**Mr. Page:** Information is not held centrally on the figures relating individual enquiries made to business link. However, my Department collects figures on the numbers of firms assisted in each quarter. Companies are recorded only once even though several enquiries may be made in the monitoring period.

During April and December 1994–the latest period for which figures are available—51,710 companies were assisted on at least one occasion.

In the 12 months April 1994 to March 1995 the Export Market Information Centre received 20,233 visitors, approximately 37,000 telephone calls and 1,343 written inquiries.

**Mr. Fisher:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the cost, in the last year for which figures are available, of *(a)* business link and *(b)* the marketing information centre. [22295]

**Mr. Page:** In the financial year 1994–95 DTI contributed £13.1 million to the establishment of business link. This was in addition to contributions from partner organisations.

In the financial year 1994–95 the net cost of the export market information centre was £1.7 million.

**Mr. Fisher:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a list of the business link centres in the United Kingdom. [22291]

**Mr. Page:** One hundred business link outlets are open in England:

1. Alnwick
2. Aykley Heads
3. Aylesbury
4. Barnsley
5. Barrow in Furness
6. Batley
7. Berwick upon Tweed
8. Birkenhead
9. Birmingham
10. Blyth
11. Bootle
12. Boston
13. Brighouse
14. Brunswick Dock
15. Carlisle
16. Central Devon
17. Chester
18. Chester le street
19. Coalville
20. Congleton
21. Coventry

22. Crewe
23. Derby
24. Derby Inner City
25. Derwentside
26. Doncaster
27. Dorset
28. Dudley
29. Durham City
30. Easington
31. East Manchester
32. Gainsborough
33. Gateshead
34. Gloucestershire
35. Grantham
36. Great Sutton
37. Halifax
38. Hereford
39. Hexham
40. Hinckley
41. Hoole Bridge
42. Huddersfield
43. Isle of Wight
44. Kendal
45. Knowsley
46. Leamington Spa
47. Leicester
48. Leominster
49. Lincoln
50. Liverpool
51. Loughborough
52. Louth
53. Macclesfield
54. Middlesborough
55. Malvern
56. Manchester (central)
57. Market Harborough
58. Melton Mowbray
59. Mount Pleasant
60. Newcastle upon Tyne
61. North Dorset
62. North Hertfordshire
63. North Tyneside
64. Nuneaton
65. Oakham
66. Oldbury
67. Oswestry
68. Pershore
69. Reading
70. Ross on Wye
71. Rotherham
72. St. Albans
73. Salford
74. Sedgefield
75. Skegness
76. Sleaford
77. Slough
78. Southport
79. South Tyneside
80. South Devon
81. Spalding
82. Stratford upon Avon
83. Sunderland
84. Swadlincote
85. Tameside
86. Teesdale
87. Telford
88. Trafford Park
89. Tyneside
90. Walsall
91. Wansbeck
92. Wearvalley (2 outlets)
94. West Cornwall
95. Weymouth
96. Whitehaven
97. Widnes
98. Wigan
99. Worcester
100. Workington

Separate arrangements are in place for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

### International Atomic Energy Agency

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the total budget of the International Atomic Energy Agency; what proportion of that budget is spent on safeguards; what is the United Kingdom's annual contribution to the budget of the agency; and what proportion of that contribution is spent on safeguards. [23071]

**Mr. Ian Taylor:** The regular budget of the International Atomic Energy Agency for 1995, as agreed by the general conference in September 1994, is $211,557,000 of which the safeguards programme accounts for 34.38 per cent. or $72,745,000.

The United Kingdom paid its share of £8,048,512 or 5.277 per cent. in full in February this year. The contributions from the member states are pooled by the IAEA and allocated amongst the wide range of programmes it supports.

### East London

**Mr. Gapes:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to visit east London to discuss industrial investment and economic development. [21978]

**Mr. Eggar:** Neither my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade nor I have plans to visit east London again at present. The Government and our key partners in economic development, local authorities and training and enterprise councils, are working to bring investment to that part of London and to ensure that it is used effectively. Partnerships have been formed to maximise European Union funding, to support inward investment, to develop regeneration strategies and to work within the Thames gateway framework. These and other joint efforts will substantially increase the competitive position of that key area of London.

### Cinema Ownership

**Mr. MacShane:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will hold discussions with directors of the Rank Organisation on its plans to acquire MGM cinemas. [23607]

**Mr. Jonathan Evans:** No. Any plans which the Rank Organisation or any other company might have to acquire MGM cinemas would be a matter for discussion with the Director General of Fair Trading, who has a duty under

the Fair Trading Act 1973 to advise my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade on whether any qualifying mergers should be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

**Mr. MacShane:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade, what communication his Department has received from the Rank Organisation about its plans to acquire MGM cinemas. [23606]

**Mr. Jonathan Evans:** I am aware that the MGM cinemas business is for sale. Until such time as I am called on to announce my decision about whether any qualifying mergers arising from the sale should be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, it would not be right for me to make any comment.

**Mr. MacShane:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the ownership of cinemas in the United Kingdom. [23608]

**Mr. Jonathan Evans:** Any proposals for changes in the ownership of cinemas in the UK which would result in qualifying mergers under the Fair Trading Act 1973 would be matters on which the Director General of Fair Trading would advise my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade as to whether they should be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

### National Grid

**Mr. Orme:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy that customers share in the profits made by the regional electricity companies on their sale of the National Grid. [21941]

**Mr. Eggar:** The National Grid Company is owned by the regional electricity companies. The Government will consider any firm proposal by the RECs for the flotation of NGC on its merits.

### Nuclear Safety

**Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment has been made of the relevance of the current operational difficulties being suffered by the Daya bay pressurised water reactors in China for the safe operation of the Sizewell B reactor. [22013]

**Mr. Page:** The problems that have been encountered with control rods at the Daya bay nuclear power station in China have no implications for the Sizewell B pressurised water reactor, which uses a different design and manufacture of fuel and control rods.

### Nigeria (Military Equipment)

**Mr. Worthington:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many requests for export licences for the export of military equipment to Nigeria have been *(a)* granted and *(b)* refused in each year from 1990; and from which firms and for what weaponry. [21939]

**Mr. Ian Taylor** *[holding answer 2 May 1995]:* Statistics of export licence applications granted and refused for goods classified under the military list of the Export of Goods (Control) Order for Nigeria for the years in question are detailed in the table. ML classifications covered by the applications are given for years 1992–1994. Similar information is not readily available for 1990 and 1991 and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. It has been the policy of successive Administrations not to disclose the details of export licences or applications for export licences. Since the introduction of the European Union measures against Nigeria, in December 1993, no export licences have been granted for the supply of lethal defence equipment to the Nigerian armed forces.

*Export licence applications for military list goods*

| *Year* | *Issued* | *Refused* | *ML classifications covered* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1990 | 30 | 0 | — |
| 1991 | 64 | 0 | — |
| 1992 | 21 | 0 | 1, 3, 4, 6, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15 |
| 1993 | 16 | 0 | 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 11, 13, 15 |
| 1994 | 20 | 1 | 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 14 (Refusal in respect of ML 1 goods) |

### Telephones

**Mr. Donohoe:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what representations his Department has received in relating to the issue of mobile telephone cloning; [23505]

(2) what assessment his Department has made of the need for legislation to prevent the cloning of mobile telephones; [23514]

(3) what discussions his Department has had with regulators of the telecommunications industry concerning the need for legislation to prevent telephone cloning; [23510]

(4) what action the Office of Telecommunications has taken to investigate the problem of cloning of mobile telephones; and what representations this agency has made to his Department on this matter; [23509]

(5) what assessment his Department has made of the costs incurred by mobile telephone users as a result of unauthorised calls being made on mobile telephones which have been cloned; [23511]

(6) what current legislation governs the operation of the mobile telephone industry. [23515]

**Mr. Ian Taylor** *[holding answers 9 May 1995]:* My Department has received a number of representations from the industry and private individuals concerning mobile phone fraud which includes the illegitimate cloning of mobile telephones. Together with the Home Office, Oftel and the Association of Chief Police Officers, we have been discussing with the mobile phone industry what steps can be taken to tackle the problem of mobile phone fraud.

The industry is in the best position to assess the costs arising from cloning and other cellular fraud offences and it is the industry which, in particular, has been taking action to improve the detection of cloned phones and prevent their use. The industry is also considering a number of other ways of combating cellular fraud, including improved control of electronic serial numbers and equipment marking schemes.

Legislation specifically governing the operation of the industry is included in the Telecommunications Act 1984 and the Wireless Telegraphy Act 1949. Offences concerning cellular fraud already exist under those Acts. In addition, the Theft Acts 1968 and 1978 cover the theft and handling of mobile phones, which often leads to their being cloned. Discussions are continuing with the industry about whether any new offences to combat cellular fraud,

including cloning, would be effective in reducing the problem.

**Mr. Donohoe:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what steps his Department has taken to prevent the cloning of telephones being utilised by his Department; and if his Department has discussed this matter with any official agencies; [23454]

(2) what costs his Department has incurred during the last 12 months as a result of cloning of mobile telephones being utilised by his Department, with particular reference to the making of unauthorised calls; [23488]

(3) what use his Department makes of hand-held and car-based mobile telephones; what were the costs for each financial year of these services since mobile telephones were first introduced to his Department; and how many mobile telephones are currently in use; [23448]

(4) how many mobile telephones being used by his Department have been cloned during the last 12 months. [23428]

**Mr. Ian Taylor** *[holding answer 9 May 1995]:* Records are no longer kept centrally of all uses of mobile telephones. However, it is estimated that, excluding next steps agencies, there are currently in the region of 800 mobile telephones in use in my Department at a cost of around £320,000 per annum.

For the same reason, I do not have a figure for the actual number of mobile telephones cloned in the past 12 months, but the information that we have suggests that it is probably fewer than 10. The Department has incurred minimal costs as the service providers have identified the cloning and credited the Department for the costs of unauthorised calls.

It is currently very difficult to prevent cloning of analogue mobile telephones. However, my Department is discussing this issue with the mobile phone industry. Close liaison with service providers helps to identify cloning at any early stage, and increasingly the Department is using digital mobile telephones which, although more expensive, are not easily cloned.

### Anglo-Japanese Trade

**Ms Armstrong:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much income was raised by United Kingdom firms in the last year through the export of *(a)* computers, *(b)* cars and *(c)* cameras to Japan; and what was the value of (i) computers, (ii) cars and (iii) cameras imported into the United Kingdom from Japan. [23029]

**Mr. Needham** *[holding answer 9 May 1995]:* The information is as follows:

*£ million*

| | *UK exports to Japan, 1994* | *UK imports from Japan, 1994* |
|---|---|---|
| Computers | 309 | 843 |
| Cars | 219 | 964 |
| Cameras | 12 | 197 |

*Source:*
Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom.
*Commodity definitions:* Computers—Standard International Trade Classification (SITC) 752 and 759.97; Cars—SITC 781; Cameras—SITC 764.82, 881.1 and 881.2.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

### Recruitment

**Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many, and what proportion of vacancies advertised by his Department, and by each of his Department's agencies, in the last three years have listed the attainment of national vocational qualifications as an acceptable entry requirement; and, of those, how many have required (i) Level 1 NVQs, (ii) Level 2 NVQs, (iii) Level 3 NVQs and (iv) other level NVQs. [22980]

**Sir John Wheeler :** The Northern Ireland Civil Service Commission recruits centrally all permanent non-industrial staff for the northern Ireland departments and agencies.

During the last three years, the Northern Ireland Civil Service Commission advertised one vacancy for which specifically a level 3 NVQ was an entry requirement. This represented less than 0.5 per cent. of all vacancies advertised. Where appropriate, advertisements make clear that applications will be considered from candidates with relevant formal qualifications considered by the commissioners to be of an equivalent or higher standard than those stated.

In addition Northern Ireland Departments run competitions for industrial and casual staff. The Department of Economic Development advertised one vacancy, listing as advantageous, the possession of NVQ assessor award D32/33. This represented 2 per cent. of competitions run by DED.

The remaining Northern Ireland departments have not used NVQs as an entry requirement for industrial and casual staff.

### Private Finance Initiatives

**Mr. Simpson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what percentage of his Department's budget is allocated to initiatives which have been undertaken to secure private finance for his Department's projects. [22794]

**Sir John Wheeler:** Almost 1 per cent. of the total budget of Northern Ireland departments and the Northern Ireland Office is directly allocated to initiatives which have been undertaken to secure private finance for projects. Other expenditure will be incurred in the consideration of private financial potential, but is an integral part of project appraisals and is not recorded separately. In addition, some expenditure will be incurred by agent bodies in the Health and Personal Social Services and Education and Library boards, but this information is not collected centrally and can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

### Temporary Class Rooms

**Mr. Beggs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many temporary classrooms are at present located on *(a)* nursery school sites, *(b)* primary school sites, *(c)* post-primary school sites and *(d)* further education college campuses in Northern Ireland. [23312]

**Mr. Ancram:** Information in the form requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, the estimated number of schools with temporary classrooms on site is as follows:

| Number of schools | Number of temporary classroom units |
|---|---|
| 600 | 1–5 |
| 100 | 6–10 |
| 35 | 11–15 |
| 30 | over 15 |

### Special Protection Areas

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list those sites which *(a)* have been designated or *(b)* meet the criteria for designation as (i) special protection areas under the European Community directive on the conservation of wild birds or (ii) Ramsar sites under the convention on wetlands of international importance. [22367]

**Mr. Moss:** In Northern Ireland two sites at Swan island and Sheep island have so far been designated as special protection areas under EC directive 79/409/EEC on the conservation of wild birds. A further 11 sites have been identified as possible meeting the criteria for designation. These are:

Belfast Lough
Carlingford Lough
Dundrum Bay
Larne Lough
Lough Foyle
Lough Neagh and Lough Beg
Outer Ards Peninsula
Rathlin Island Cliffs
Strangford Lough
Upper Lough Erne
Pettigoe Plateau

One site has already been designated under the Ramsar convention, Lough Neagh and Lough Beg. All the sites on the above lists also qualify for designation as Ramsar sites, with the exception of the Rathlin island cliffs.

### The Banks Residential Home

**Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what consideration he took of the independent advocate's report when coming to his decision to close the Banks residential home; what account he took of the commitment of the North Down trust to existing residents that they would be allowed to remain there; and if he will protect the rights of existing residents to remain in the Banks if it should be sold. [23330]

**Mr. Moss:** I have taken fully into account the independent advocate's report along with all the other views and representations which have been made to me.

I respect the North Down and Ards community trust's desire to accommodate the wishes of the residents and to provide a further option in terms of future accommodation. I have asked the trust to proceed with inquiries with the independent nursing homes sector about how the site can be redeveloped while allowing the residents to remain.

However, the disposal of the site will have to be handled in light of Government rules about disposal of assets and value for money and demonstration of fair and open competition. As a result there can be no guarantee that the desired outcome will materialise.

### Old People's Homes

**Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information was available to him about alternative provision when he decided to close six old people's residential homes as announced on 21 April; if he will list the deficiencies in each of the homes and the estimated capital cost of rectifying these deficiencies; and what is the potential capacity in these homes and the per capita cost of maintaining residents. [23327]

**Mr. Moss:** When I announced my decision to endorse the proposal of trusts to close six residential homes for the elderly, I was aware that the following alternative provision existed in the areas:

700 statutory residential home places
3,799 independent residential and nursing home places

At the time of my decision there were approximately 345 vacancies in the statutory independent homes sector. The deficiencies in each of the homes, the estimated capital cost of rectifying these deficiencies, the potential capacity and the per capita cost of maintaining residents are as follows.

SOUTH AND EAST BELFAST HSS TRUST

*James Dixon House*

Potential capacity = 41

Per capita cost 94–95 = £232.70 per week

Deficiencies:

The building is institutional in character. It has long corridors, the toilets are inappropriately positioned given the increasing frailty of residents, bedroom sizes are small and increasingly the registration and inspection unit has been seeking a commitment from the trust that double rooms be made into singles. The home requires substantial expenditure to modernise it and to bring it up to an acceptable minimum standard as set out in the Health and Safety at Work (NI) Order.

Capital expenditure cost = £345,000

*Enler House*

Potential capacity = 49

Per capita cost 94–95 = £301.89 per week

Deficiencies:

The facility was built upon traditional lines with many institutional features including long corridors, double rooms and poorly located toilets. The home requires substantial expenditure to modernise it and to bring it up to an acceptable minimum standard as set out in the Health and Safety at Work (NI) Order.

Capital Expenditure Cost = £409,000

*Marlborough House*

Potential Capacity = 27

Per Capita Cost 94–95 = £681.34 per week

Deficiencies:

It is a large old building which was converted six years ago to a home for elderly mentally infirm people. The building is functionally unsuitable for its task. It does not meet fire code standards. The home requires substantial expenditure to modernise it and to bring it up to an acceptable minimum standard as set out in the Health and Safety at Work (NI) Order.

Capital Expenditure Cost = £325,000

NORTH AND WEST BELFAST HSS TRUST

*Old See House*

Potential Capacity = 40

Per Capita Cost 94–95 = £285.87 per week

Deficiencies:

It was opened in 1977 and although some upgrading work has been carried out further extensive work is required. The home requires substantial expenditure to modernise it and to bring it up to an acceptable minimum standard as set out in the Health and Safety at Work (NI) Order.

Capital Expenditure Cost = £280,000

*Cairns House*

Potential Capacity = 40

Per Capita Cost 94–95 = £370.56 per week

Deficiencies:

Its location has limited accessibility. The home requires substantial expenditure to modernise it and to bring it up to an acceptable minimum standard as set out in the Health and Safety at Work (NI) Order.

Capital Expenditure Cost = £205,000

NORTH DOWN AND ARDS HSS TRUST

*The Banks*

Potential Capacity = 40

Per Capita Cost 94–95 = £621.86 per week

Deficiencies:

It requires upgrading work to be carried out to bring it up to fire and safety standards. The building provides double room facilities which would need to be converted to singles. The rooms are small and the corridors are long. The home requires substantial expenditure to modernise it and to bring it up to an acceptable minimum standard as set out in the Health and Safety at Work (NI) Order.

Capital Expenditure Cost = £600,000

**Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will indicate what criteria are used by health and social services trusts to admit elderly people to independent homes with financial support from the trusts. [23328]

**Mr. Moss:** People who are assessed as in need of care in a residential or nursing home with public financial support can, within certain reasonable criteria, choose which home they enter.

The criteria which trusts apply on behalf of Health and Social Services boards are as follows:

the accommodation must be suitable for the assessed needs of the individual;

the cost to the board should not be more than it would usually expect to pay for someone with the individual's assessed needs;

the accommodation must be available;

the person in charge of the home must be willing to provide accommodation subject to the board's usual terms and conditions for such accommodation.

**Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the average full per capita cost to unit trusts in supporting elderly residents in independent homes. [23329]

**Mr. Moss:** The information required is not held centrally in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

## DEFENCE

### Expenditure

**Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the defence expenditure in each year since 1985; and if he will specify the deflator to be applied to plans up to 1997–98. [23516]

**Mr. Soames:** The information requested is set out in the statistical supplement to the "Financial Statement and Budget Report", 1995–96, Cm 2821, tables 3.2 and 1.1.

### Equipment Orders

**Sir Nicholas Bonsor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence for what military purpose 20 truck mounted 12 tonne cranes are to be purchased as set out in future purchase No. LV1A/260; what consideration he has given to leasing or contract hire of cranes; and if he will make a statement. [22523]

**Mr. Freeman:** The 12 tonne cranes will be procured as replacements for existing RAF equipments that have reached the end of their economic lives. They will be used in aircraft maintenance and workshop areas within operational RAF stations. The provision, management and support of service transport is at present being reviewed to determine whether, and to what extent, there is scope for greater private sector involvement. The primary aim of this review is to secure greater value for money. We intend to establish some pilot leasing schemes this calendar year. Tender LV1A/260 therefore reflects the present procurement arrangements, but any resultant contract will be placed for the minimum quantity required in the financial year 1995–96, with options only for future years.

**Sir Nicholas Bonsor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence for what military purpose approximately 100 all-wheel drive pick-ups, vans and 11 seat station wagons are required, as set out in tender No. LV2A/265; what consideration he has given to leasing or contract hire; what consideration he has given to extending the number of companies invited to tender; and if he will make a statement. [22524]

**Mr. Freeman:** The all-wheel drive vehicles will be procured as replacements for exiting Navy, Army and RAF equipments that have reached the end of their economic lives. They will mainly be used to transport stores and personnel, both on and off road. The provision, management and support of service transport is at present under review to determine whether, and to what extent, there is scope for greater private sector involvement. The primary aim of the review is to secure greater value for money. We do not intend to establish a number of pilot leasing schemes this calendar year. Future purchase tender LV2A/265 therefore reflects the present procurement arrangements, but any resultant contract will be placed for the minimum quantity required in the financial year 1995–96, with options only for future years. The final distribution of tenders will depend solely on companies registering an interest against this advertisement. The future purchase tender identifies two companies. They were the only companies known to meet the Department's required quality standard.

### RAF Valley

**Mr. Harvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the outcome of the recent market testing survey at Royal Air Force Valley. [22409]

**Mr. Soames:** Further to a feasibility study which recommended market-testing a broad range of activities, my Department has proposed contractorising support services at RAF Valley. This proposal is subject to consultation with the trades unions and other interested parties.

**Mr. Harvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what will be the annual cost of renting additional airspace for Royal Air Force Valley weapons training's air-to-air gunnery after Aberporth range is given agency status. [22414]

**Mr. Soames:** There will be no cost for the use of the airspace.

**Mr. Harvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a comparison between the weapon task achievement over the last two weeks of Royal Air Force Chivenor being in operation and the average at Royal Air Force Valley. [22415]

**Mr. Soames:** In the last two weeks of weapon task training from RAF Chivenor, 148 sorties were flown by RAF Valley aircraft using RAF Chivenor as a forward operating base. This represented an increase in the normal level of tasking and was in anticipation of a brief interruption prior to RAF St. Athan becoming available. The average number of weapon task training sorties planned by RAF Valley for any two-week period is 120.

## RAF Commands

**Mr. Harvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the total cost of the rationalisation of the Royal Air Force structure by the creation of an additional command. [22413]

**Mr. Soames:** There has been no increase in the number of RAF commands. RAF Germany ceased to be a separate command in April 1993 and now has group status within RAF Strike Command. RAF Logistics Command and RAF Personnel and Training Command were established on 1 April 1994 replacing RAF Support Command and the former Departments of AMSO and AMP. These changes result in significant overall cost savings.

## RAF Relocation

**Mr. Harvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration has been given to relocating the Fleet Requirements and Air Direction Unit or any other flying unit to Royal Air Force Chivenor; and what building work would be necessary. [22411]

**Mr. Soames:** Consideration was given to relocating the Fleet Requirements and Air Direction Unit to RAF Chivenor, but an alternative location was preferred on operational and cost grounds. No other suitable options for relocating flying activity to the station have been identified.

**Mr. Harvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what arrangements have been made to bridge the gap between the cessation of the Hawk support flight at Royal Air Force Chivenor and the tactical armament facility—Hawk—detachment being ready at Royal Air Force St. Athan; what will be the cost of such interim arrangements; and why this work is not being continued at Royal Air Force Chivenor. [22416]

**Mr. Soames:** As part of the plans for the longer-term enhancement of RAF St. Athan to accept Hawk detachments, some early work was identified as essential to provide sufficient initial capability for the weaponry requirements. The cost of this work was £290,000. The task is not being continued at RAF Chivenor because it is not compatible with the stations's future.

**Mr. Harvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what impact the closure of Royal Air Force Finningley and transfer of navigation training to Royal Air Force Valley will have on the calculations about Royal Air Force Valley's capacity which were made when the decision was taken to close Royal Air Force Chivenor. [22417]

**Mr. Soames:** The impact is minimal. The rationalisation of Hawk instructor training at RAF Valley has created spare capacity at the station, and this offsets the extra navigator training task transferring from RAF Finningley.

## RAF St. Athan

**Mr. Harvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what impact the proximity of Cardiff airport to Royal Air Force St. Athan has on its flying capacity; and what are the comparative figures for available capacity at Royal Air Force Chivenor. [22418]

**Mr. Soames:** On current and future planned usage, the proximity of Cardiff airport has no impact on RAF St. Athan operations. A simple comparison of criteria which define capacity shows that RAF Chivenor has greater capacity than RAF St. Athan, but detailed comparative capacity figures could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

## RAF Chivenor

**Mr. Harvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the cost of maintaining the runway and airfield operation at Royal Air Force Chivenor. [22410]

**Mr. Soames:** There is no requirement to retain the runway and airfield operation at RAF Chivenor beyond 1 October this year, although the search and rescue flight will remain within an enclave at the station.

**Mr. Harvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment has been made of the advantages of joint usage and funding of the airfield operation at Royal Air Force Chivenor by the Royal Air Force, Royal Navy and Royal Marines. [22412]

**Mr. Soames:** No viable options have been identified for joint usage and funding of the airfield operation.

## Mr. Gordon Foxley

**Ms Janet Anderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will now place in the Library a copy of the MOD report into the activities of Mr. Gordon Foxley. [22628]

**Mr. Freeman:** I refer the hon. Lady to my reply to her of 27 April, *Official Report*, column *696*. In the current circumstances of my Department's civil proceedings against Gordon Foxley and others, there is nothing I would wish to add to the account given in the Comptroller and Auditor General's report referred to.

## Fox Hunts

**Mr. Meale:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the military drivers and grooms who act as support staff for armed forces personnel who attend fox hunts have a choice in undertaking these duties. [22397]

**Mr. Soames:** Members of the armed forces who are permitted to hunt as part of their duties rely on volunteers to act as grooms and drivers.

**Mr. Meale:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total income from hunts that have licences to hunt on his Department's land in 1994 to 1995; what was the increase made for inflation; and if these licences were open to public tender. [22398]

**Mr. Soames:** The total income from licensing fox hunts to hunt over my Department's land during the 1994–95 fox hunting season was £779.45, including administration charges. Fees charged are not linked to inflationary increases but are based on the commercial judgment of the Defence Land Agent. These licences were not open to public tender due to insufficient demand to justify normal tender procedures.

### Plutonium

**Mr. Simpson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 26 April, *Official Report*, column *588*, if he will make a statement on the future location, ownership and use of fuel grade plutonium to be separated from spent fuel at the Chapelcross and Calder Hall reactors, with particular reference to the military stockpile. [22399]

**Mr. Soames:** The material in question will continue to be stored at Sellafield and there are no plans to transfer it to the civilian stockpile.

### Low Flying

**Mr. Jopling:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many low-level training sorties were carried out by *(a)* the Royal Air force and i(b) other air forces in the United Kingdom during April; and how many of these were in (i) the Lake district and (ii) the Yorkshire dales national parks. [22435]

**Mr. Soames:** Statistics on the use of the United Kingdom low flying system during April will not be available until towards the end of May. My noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence will then write to the hon. Member with details of the numbers of sorties carried out in the United Kingdom by British military aircraft and by those of other air forces. Statistics are not available on the number of sorties flown over particular locations, nor is it possible for these to be estimated.

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many incidents have been recorded in each year since 1990 involving low-flying military aircraft and microlights and hang gliders. [22937]

**Mr. Soames:** The information requested is as follows:

| *Year* | *Microlights* | *Hang gliders* |
|---|---|---|
| 1990 | 5 | 4 |
| 1991 | 8 | 1 |
| 1992 | 2 | 2 |
| 1993 | 2 | 3 |
| 1994 | 1 | 1 |

### Private Finance Initiative

**Mr. Simpson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what percentage of his Department's budget is allocated to initiatives which have been undertaken to secure private finance for his Department's projects. [22783]

**Mr. Freeman:** It is expected that about £730,000, which represents 0.0034 per cent. of the defence budget, for 1995–96 will be spent by the Department's private finance unit in direct support for the private finance initiative. This does not include costs incurred in support of projects where the possibility of private finance is being explored, or the costs of the projects themselves.

### Air Misses

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many category A air misses between military and civilian aircraft over the United Kingdom have been reported in each year since 1989. [22806]

**Mr. Soames:** The information requested is as follows:

1989: 12
1990: 12
1991: 8
1992: 9
1993: 4
1994: 2

### Training

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what special training is given to persons who have responsibility for assessing the historical significance of documents held by his Department. [23291]

**Mr. Soames:** Training in assessing the significance of departmental records is carried out under the guidance of the Keeper of Public Records. It is provided in a number of different ways, including courses on the appraisal of records and through conferences and seminars arranged by the Public Record Office. Additionally, Ministry of Defence reviewers, who are former senior officials recruited for their breadth of experience of the Department and its business, liaise closely with our historical branches. They work to a comprehensive instructions manual.

### Empty Properties, Berkshire

**Mr. Jamieson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received from hon. Members in constituencies in Berkshire regarding empty dwellings owned by his Department. [22833]

**Mr. Soames:** My right hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood) has corresponded with my noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence about married quarters at Clayhill near Burghfield in Berkshire.

**Mr. Jamieson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many empty dwellings his Department owns in each constituency in Berkshire. [22834]

**Mr. Soames:** As at 31 March, my Department owned the following empty properties in the constituencies of Berkshire:

| | *Number* |
|---|---|
| East Berkshire | 14 |
| Windsor and Maidenhead | 6 |
| Reading East | 110 |
| Reading West | 0 |
| Newbury | 171 |
| Slough | 2 |
| Wokingham | 0 |

A large number of the vacant properties are either undergoing or awaiting major maintenance work, already

allotted to service families due to move in shortly or form part of the management margin needed to ensure that accommodation is available for entitled service families.

Of the 171 vacant properties in Newbury, 72 are in the process of being sold.

### Land Mines

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) of 27 January, *Official Report*, column *445*, for what reasons Her Majesty's Government do not include land mines possessing a self-destruct mechanism in their moratorium on the export of land mines. [23094]

**Mr. Freeman:** As announced by the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, on 15 March 1995, *Official Report*, column *862*, the Government have extended the moratorium on the export of anti-personnel land mines, so that it is now prohibited to export non-self-destruct and non-detectable anti-personnel land mines to any destination, and to export any type of anti-personnel land mine to countries which have not ratified the United Nations weaponry convention.

### Telephones

**Mr. Donohoe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what costs his Department have incurred during the last 12 months as a result of cloning of mobile telephones being utilised by his Department, with particular reference to the making of unauthorised calls; [23496]

(2) how many mobile telephones being utilised by his Department have been cloned during the last 12 months; [23501]

(3) what steps his Department has taken to prevent the cloning of telephones being utilised by his Department; and if his Department has discussed this matter with any official agencies; [23464]

(4) what representations his Department has made to the Department of Trade and Industry concerning the need for legislation to prevent the cloning of mobile telephones. [23471]

**Mr. Soames** *[holding answer 9 March 1995]:* The cloning of mobile telephones used by my Department has so far affected only telephones fitted in official cars. The Department's records show that 27 official car telephones have been cloned during the last 12 months. To prevent further cloning all official car phones are being upgraded to a global system for mobile communications models operating on digital networks. There is no evidence that GSM digital telephones can be cloned in the same manner as analogue mobile telephones.

The cost of unauthorised calls, as a result of a mobile telephone being cloned, is borne by the service provider and not charged to my Department. The cost of the car conversion to a digital GSM telephone is approximately £340 excluding VAT.

We have worked very closely with telephone service providers and cellular network operators to prevent the cloning of mobile telephones. My Department has made no official representation to the Department of Trade and Industry about the need for legislation to prevent the cloning of mobile telephones.

### Allowances

**Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 25 April, *Official Report*, columns *491–94*, what was the total amount paid in allowances in 1993–94 and 1994–95; and if he will set out the occasions during the last 10 years when the allowances have been revised. [22189]

**Mr. Soames** *[holding answer 2 May 1995]:* The total amount paid in allowances to attaches and advisers in 1993–94 and 1994–95 was £3,946,000 and £3,491,000 respectively. These totals include cost of living and related allowances—which are paid to all personnel serving overseas—as well as those allowances which are related to the particular post. Allowances are reviewed at regular monthly intervals, except for representational attachment allowance which is assessed annually.

## HEALTH

### Primary Care and Deprivation

**Mrs. Beckett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the relationship between primary care spending and deprivation. [21928]

**Mr. Malone:** Extra funds are made available to general practitioners working in under-privileged areas through the deprivation payment scheme.

### Agency Staff

**Mr. Spellar:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health, what is her Department's estimate of the use of agency staff in the NHS over the last five years. [21994]

**Mr. Malone:** The tables show the whole-time equivalent numbers of agency nurses, midwives, medical and dental staff working in the national health service over the last five years.

*NHS hospital and community health service agency nursing and midwifery staff, England 1989–93 As at 30 September for each year*

| | *Qualified and Unqualified whole-time equivalents* |
|---|---|
| 1989 | 7,230 |
| 1990 | 6,710 |
| 1991 | 3,930 |
| 1992 | 3,230 |
| 1993 | 4,780 |

*Source:* PD(STATS) Medical and Non-Medical Workforce Censuses.
*Note:*
All figures are rounded to the nearest ten whole-time equivalents.

*Hospital Medical and Dental Agency Staff, England 1989–93. As at 30 September for each year*

| | *Qualified whole-time equivalents* |
|---|---|
| 1989 | 480 |
| 1990 | 500 |
| 1991 | 480 |
| 1992 | 540 |
| 1993 | 510 |

*Source:* PD(STATS) Medical and Non-Medical Workforce Censuses.
*Note:*
All figures are rounded to the nearest ten whole-time equivalents.

## Medical Negligence

**Mr. Kevin Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent representations she has received on the length of time taken to resolve medical negligence claims involving the national health service. [22201]

**Mr. Malone:** Hon. Members have asked two questions on this subject this year and, in addition, we have received representations about two individual cases.

## Ministerial Visits

**Ms Jowell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health which hospitals in inner and greater London *(a)* she and *(b)* the Minister of State have visited in the last 12 months; and on what dates. [22652]

**Mr. Malone:** There have been numerous visits to hospitals in inner and greater London during the past year. The information is shown in the table.

| *Minister* | *Hospital* | *Date* |
|---|---|---|
| Minister for Health (Dr. Mawhinney) | Queen Mary's University hospital | 16 May 1994 |
| Minister for Health (Dr. Mawhinney) | Harefield hospital | 13 June 1994 |
| Minister for Health (Dr. Mawhinney) | Royal London Homeopathic hospital | 16 June 1994 |
| Secretary of State | St. George's hospital | 20 June 1994 |
| Minister for Health (Dr. Mawhinney) | Charing Cross hospital | 4 July 1994 |
| Minister for Health (Mr. Malone) | St. Charles hospital | 27 July 1994 |
| Minister for Health (Mr. Malone) | King's College hospital school of medicine and dentistry | 27 July 1994 |
| Secretary of State | Royal National Throat Nose and Ear hospital | 15 September 1994 |
| Minister for Health (Mr. Malone) | St Giles' hospital, Camberwell (Optimum Health Services NHS Trust) | 4 October 1994 |
| Secretary of State | Lewisham and Guy's Mental Health NHS Trust | 17 October 1994 |
| Minister for Health (Mr. Malone) | Royal London hospital | 20 October 1994 |
| Secretary of State | Chelsea and Westminster hospital | 13 November 1994 |
| Minister for Health (Mr. Malone) | St. Bartholomew's hospital | 1 December 1994 |
| Minister for Health (Mr. Malone) | Guy's hospital | 7 December 1994 |
| Minister for Health (Mr. Malone) | Homerton hospital, London Chest hospital | 16 January 1995 |
| Minister for Health (Mr. Malone) | St. Thomas' hospital | 18 January 1995 |
| Minister for Health (Mr. Malone) | Royal Homeopathic hospital | 8 February 1995 |
| Minister for Health (Mr. Malone) | University College London hospital | 8 March 1995 |
| Secretary of State | King's College hospital | 22 March 1995 |
| Minister for Health (Mr. Malone) | The London Hospital for Sick Children | 27 March 1995 |
| Minister for Health (Mr. Malone) | King's College hospital | 27 March 1995 |
| Minister for Health (Mr. Malone) | St. Ann's hospital (Haringey Community Services NHS Trust) | 21 April 1995 |
| Minister for Health (Mr. Malone) | Western Eye hospital (St. Mary's NHS Hospital Trust) | 1 May 1995 |

## HIV and AIDS

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the research sponsored by her Department and the amount spent on each project for *(a)* AIDS/HIV prevention and *(b)* AIDS/HIV treatment, for the last five years for which figures are available; and if she will make a statement. [22669]

**Mr. Malone:** The main agency through which the Government support research into HIV and AIDS is the Medical Research Council which receives its grant-in-aid from the office of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

Over the last five financial years the Department of Health has contributed to the MRC's work to a value of £1,233,161 in 1990–91, £2,000,700 in 1991–92, £1,708,967 in 1992–93, £1,794,722 in 1993–94 with a £1,210,000 estimated expenditure in 1994–95.

In addition, the Department is funding its own programme of research covering the health and social care for people with HIV/AIDS. Over the last five financial years funding of the programme has been £593,000 in 1990–91, £786,000 in 1991–92, £789,000 in 1992–93, £834,000 in 1993–94 with an estimated expenditure of £955,000 in 1994–95.

The nature of the work undertaken means that it is not possible to split the research projects between prevention and treatment; many will cover both aspects.

The work undertaken by the Department is listed in two recent publications, "The Health and Social Care for People with HIV Infection and AIDS" and "Centrally Commissioned Research Programme." Copies of both publications are available in the Library.

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the research work that her Department sponsors on HIV/AIDS which incorporates international co-operation. [22667]

**Mr. Malone:** The Department's programme of policy research covers the delivery of health and social care to people with HIV infection and AIDS in England. Researchers carrying out the work have strong international links but given the nature of the studies sponsored by the Department it is appropriate that they are based in this country.

## Whooping Cough Vaccine

**Mr. Mike O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evaluation her departmental advisers have made of the research by Dr. Michel Odent suggesting a link between whooping cough vaccine and childhood asthma and ear infections. [22895]

**Mr. Sackville:** The Department of Health is aware of Dr. Odent's suggestion that there is an association between the rise in acceptance of whooping cough vaccine, and asthma and other conditions. However, Dr. Odent has failed to consider that until the mid-1970s acceptance of whooping cough vaccine was very high and did not appear then to be linked with asthma. The Public Health Laboratory Service is in close contact with other international agencies investigating this suggestion.

### Complaints Procedure

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy that family health service authorities are informed of, and directed to make maximum use of, the voluntary services of groups of conciliators when dealing with complaints. [22733]

**Mr. Malone:** Since 1990 family health services authorities have been required to make available a process of conciliation to resolve complaints against family health services practitioners. It is for each authority to make appropriate local arrangements for provision of this service.

### Patients

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action she is taking to prevent patients being left on trolleys for excessive periods by hospital trusts. [22893]

**Mr. Sackville:** Under the new patients charter for England, any patient who needs to be admitted to hospital through an accident and emergency department can expect to be given a bed as soon as possible, and certainly within three to four hours. From April 1996 this standard will be improved to two hours.

### Local Health Needs

**Mr. Khabra:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps her Department is taking to improve the identification of primary health care issues in local areas. [22894]

**Mr. Malone:** Family health services authorities work closely with primary care professionals in their areas to identify and respond to local needs. Subject to Parliament's approval, this function will be strengthened by the establishment of unitary health authorities, from April 1996, to replace district health authorities and family health services authorities. The new health authorities will have overall responsibility for assessing the health care needs of the local population.

### Committee on Safety of Medicines

**Ms Hodge:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what arrangements are made for an independent body to oversee the working of the Committee on Safety of Medicines. [22925]

**Mr. Sackville:** The Medicines Commission, established under section 2 of the Medicines Act 1968, has a general function to advise Ministers on matters relating to the Medicines Act or the exercise of any power conferred by it. The commission has a specific duty to review the functions of committees, including the Committee on Safety of Medicines, established under section 4 of the Act. In addition, the commission considers representations made by an applicant or licence holder where the licensing authority has been advised by the CSM to refuse, suspend, revoke or vary a licence.

### Training

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what special training is given to persons who have responsibility for assessing the historical significance of documents held by her Department. [23286]

**Mr. Sackville:** Training in assessing the historical significance of Department of Health records is carried out under the guidance of the Keeper of Public Records. It is provided in a number of different ways, including courses on the appraisal of records and through conferences and seminars arranged by the Public Record Office.

### Drugs and Alcohol Grants

**Mr. Dowd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much each local authority has bid for the drug and alcohol specific grant for 1995–96; and how much was awarded. [23631]

**Mr. Bowis:** A list of bids, made and awarded will be placed in the Library. Local social services authorities submit bids in respect of local voluntary sector projects that they wish to support. Each successful project may be supported for up to three years.

# Written Answers to Questions

*Thursday 11 May 1995*

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

### Conflicts of Interest

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on how many occasions during the last five years *(a)* civil servants and *(b)* special advisers in his Department or its agencies have declared conflicts of interest; and how many instructions have been issued about their retention, disposal or management. [21385]

**Mr. Goodlad** *[holding answer 1 May 1995]:* Any conflict of interest involving civil servants and special advisers would have been dealt with in accordance with the established guidance. Records of the number of cases are not held centrally.

### Indonesia

**Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what date he sought assurances from the Government of Indonesia that the AR325 three-dimensional radar sensors with data display and handling systems supplied by Plessey Radar would not be deployed in East Timor. [23250]

**Mr. Goodlad:** We received general assurances from the Indonesian Government on 8 June 1994 that British defence equipment would not be used for internal repression in East Timor.

**Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what dates he sought assurances from the Government of Indonesia that British-supplied defence equipment would not be used against *(a)* the GAM (Aceh), *(b)* the OPM—West Papua, Irian Jaya—and *(c)* FRETELIN—East Timor. [23238]

**Mr. Goodlad:** We received assurances from the Indonesian Government on 8 June 1994 that British-supplied defence equipment would not be used against civilians in East Timor or in Indonesia.

**Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many Indonesian military personnel have been funded by his Department to attend courses in the United Kingdom through the United Kingdom military training assistance scheme in each year since 1 January 1990. [23246]

**Mr. Goodlad:** Details of military training between ourselves and individual countries are confidential between Governments.

**Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what date he sought an assurance from the Indonesian Government that Hawk aircraft would not be used for internal security purposes. [23254]

**Mr. Goodlad:** On 24 June 1993.

**Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on which date he sought an assurance from the Indonesian Government that British-supplied defence equipment would not be used for internal security purposes. [23236]

**Mr. Goodlad:** We have on several occasions, most recently on 2 February 1995, sought the assurance of the Indonesian Government that British-supplied defence equipment would not be used for internal repression in Indonesia and East Timor.

**Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many official visitors to the United Kingdom from Indonesia were funded by his Department in 1994; and if he will list the dates of their stay in the United Kingdom. [23252]

**Mr. Goodlad:** Two; on 8 to 11 July.

**Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on which date he last sought assurance from the Government of Indonesia that British-supplied defence equipment would not be deployed in East Timor. [23240]

**Mr. Goodlad:** On 2 February 1995.

**Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on which date he was made aware that British-supplied Hawk aircraft were in service with one of the Indonesian air force's two counter-insurgency squadrons. [23248]

**Mr. Goodlad:** The British-supplied Hawk aircraft is in use with the Indonesian air force as a jet trainer.

**Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on which date he asked for assurances from the Government of Indonesia that the former Royal Navy supply ship, the Green Rover, would not be deployed in the territorial waters of East Timor. [23239]

**Mr. Goodlad:** Specific assurances on the use of this equipment were not sought.

**Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the phrase "internal security purposes", used in his answer of 9 February 1994 to the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke), *Official Report*, column *283*, includes activities by the Indonesian armed forces in East Timor. [23255]

**Mr. Goodlad:** As I explained in my reply to the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) on 9 February 1994, column *283*, the Indonesian Government have given us assurances that Hawk aircraft will not be used for internal security purposes. By their own definition, this includes activities by the Indonesian armed forces in the territory of East Timor.

We have never recognised Indonesia's annexation of East Timor.

**Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the phrase "civilian population", as used in his answer of 9 February 1994 to the hon. Member for Monklands, West, (Mr. Clarke), *Official Report*, column *283*, in terms of its application to the populations in Indonesia and East Timor. [23253]

**Mr. Goodlad:** The use of the term "civilian population" was intended to demonstrate our policy of not licensing for export to Indonesia any equipment which we

consider likely to be used for internal repression in East Timor or Indonesia.

**Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what dates he sought assurances from the Government of Indonesia that British-supplied defence equipment would not be deployed in East Timor *(a)* on land, *(b)* in its territorial waters and *(c)* in its airspace. [23237]

**Mr. Goodlad:** We have received assurances from the Indonesian Government, on a number of occasions, that British-supplied defence equipment would not be used for internal repression in East Timor. In the case of the Scorpion armoured vehicles, announced by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade on 2 March 1995, column *716*, the Indonesian Government assured us on 2 February 1995 that these vehicles would not be deployed in East Timor.

## Overseas Missions (Staff)

**Dr. Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many staff, and at what grades, who were not employed in entry clearance work were in post in *(a)* New York, *(b)* Moscow, *(c)* St. Petersburg, *(d)* Accra, *(e)* Lagos, *(f)* Abuja, *(g)* New Delhi, *(h)* Bombay, *(j)* Calcutta, *(k)* Madras, *(l)* Dhaka, *(m)* Islamabad, *(n)* Karachi and *(o)* Colombo in the financial years (i) 1992–93, (ii) 1993–94 and (iii) 1994–95 to the latest convenient date. [22647]

**Mr. Goodlad** *[holding answer of 9 May 1995]:* Details of the staff at the 14 overseas missions listed who are not employed in entry clearance work are given in the table. These figures include some service attachés and staff from other Government Departments and agencies for whom the FCO is not financially responsible. Separate tables are provided for the financial years 1992–93, 1993–94 and 1994–95.

*Staff numbers not employed in entry clearance work—1992–93*

| | Head of Post | Minister | Counsellor | First Secretary | Second Secretary | Third Secretary | Support | LE | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Abuja | — | — | — | 3 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 33.5 | 41.5 |
| Accra | 1 | — | 2 | 3 | 3 | 8 | 4 | 80.5 | 101.5 |
| Bombay | 1 | — | — | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 62 | 69 |
| Calcutta | 1 | — | — | — | — | — | — | 46 | 47 |
| Colombo | 1 | — | 1 | 1 | 3 | 6 | 5 | 71.5 | 88.5 |
| Dhaka | 1 | — | 2 | 5 | 4 | 15 | 5 | 82.5 | 114.5 |
| Islamabad | 1 | — | 4 | 10 | 6 | 14 | 12 | 123 | 170 |
| Karachi | 1 | — | — | — | — | 1 | 1 | 52 | 55 |
| Lagos | 1 | — | 2 | 3 | 7 | 12 | 6 | 161 | 192 |
| Madras | 1 | — | — | — | 1 | — | — | 15.5 | 17.5 |
| Moscow | 1 | 1 | 8 | 10 | 17 | 19 | 23 | 79 | 158 |
| New Delhi | 1 | 1 | 7 | 21 | 15 | 8 | 14 | 267 | 334 |
| New York | 2 | 0 | 4 | 8 | 5 | 8 | 2 | 107 | 136 |
| St. Petersburg | 1 | — | — | 1 | — | — | 2 | 10 | 14 |

*Staff numbers not employed in entry clearance work—1993–94*

| | Head of Post | Minister | Counsellor | First Secretary | Second Secretary | Third Secretary | Support | LE | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Abuja | 1 | — | — | 3 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 33.5 | 45.5 |
| Accra | 1 | — | 2 | 3 | 3 | 7 | 4 | 81.5 | 101.5 |
| Bombay | 1 | — | — | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 63 | 70 |
| Calcutta | 1 | — | — | — | 1 | — | — | 46 | 48 |
| Colombo | 1 | — | 1 | 1 | 3 | 6 | 5 | 71.5 | 88.5 |
| Dhaka | 1 | — | 2 | 5 | 4 | 15 | 5 | 94.5 | 126.5 |
| Islamabad | 1 | — | 4 | 10 | 6 | 14 | 12 | 123 | 170 |
| Karachi | 1 | — | — | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 52 | 59 |
| Lagos | 1 | — | 2 | 3 | 7 | 13 | 6 | 169 | 201 |
| Madras | 1 | — | — | — | 1 | — | — | 15.5 | 17.5 |
| Moscow | 1 | 1 | 8 | 10.5 | 17 | 20 | 23 | 91 | 171.5 |
| New Delhi | 1 | 1 | 6 | 20 | 15 | 7 | 14 | 267 | 331 |
| New York | 2 | — | 4 | 7 | 8 | 10 | 2 | 105 | 138 |
| St. Petersburg | 1 | — | — | 1 | — | — | 2 | 10 | 14 |

*Staff numbers not employed in entry clearance work—1994–95*

| | Head of Post | Minister | Counsellor | First Secretary | Second Secretary | Third Secretary | Support | LE | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Abuja | 1 | — | — | 1 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 33.5 | 41.5 |
| Accra | 1 | — | 2 | 3 | 3 | 7 | 4 | 72.25 | 92.25 |
| Bombay | 1 | — | — | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 60 | 67 |
| Calcutta | 1 | — | — | — | 1 | 1 | — | 40 | 43 |
| Colombo | 1 | — | 1 | 1 | 3 | 6 | 5 | 69.5 | 86.5 |
| Dhaka | 1 | — | 2 | 5 | 4 | 16 | 5 | 70.7 | 103.7 |
| Islamabad | 1 | — | 4 | 8 | 7 | 10 | 12 | 127 | 169 |
| Karachi | 1 | — | — | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 53 | 61 |

*Staff numbers not employed in entry clearance work—1994–95*

| | Head of Post | Minister | Counsellor | First Secretary | Second Secretary | Third Secretary | Support | LE | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Lagos | 1 | — | 1 | 3 | 6 | 12 | 5 | 164 | 192 |
| Madras | 1 | — | — | — | 1 | — | — | 20.35 | 22.35 |
| Moscow | 1 | 1 | 8 | 12 | 19 | 18 | 17 | 113 | 189 |
| New Delhi | 1 | 1 | 6 | 10 | 10 | 3 | 13 | 286 | 330 |
| New York | 2 | — | 4 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 2 | 102.5 | 134.5 |
| St. Petersburg | 1 | — | — | 1 | 1 | — | — | 11 | 14 |

### Telephones

**Mr. Donohoe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what use his Department makes of hand-held and car-based mobile telephones; what were the costs for each financial year of these services since mobile telephones were first introduced to his Department; and how many mobile telephones are currently in use. [23451]

**Mr. Goodlad** *[holding answer of 9 May 1995]:* We supply mobile phones to individuals and departments where this enhances the effectiveness of their work. We cannot provide a breakdown of costs prior to 1993 without incurring disproportionate cost. Costs for the financial years since are:

| [1]*1993–94* £ | [1]*1994–95* £ |
|---|---|
| 80,415 | 116,302.36 |

[1] Aid wing figures not available.

There are 195 hand-portable sets and 11 car phones in use within the diplomatic and aid wings of the FCO.

**Mr. Donohoe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations his Department has made to the Department of Trade and Industry concerning the need for legislation to prevent the cloning of mobile telephones. [23470]

**Mr. Goodlad** *[holding answer of 9 May 1995]:* Neither the FCO nor the ODA has made representations to the DTI regarding the need for legislation to prevent the cloning of mobile telephones.

**Mr. Donohoe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps his Department has taken to prevent the cloning of telephones being utilised by his Department; and if his Department has discussed this matter with any official agencies. [23456]

**Mr. Goodlad** *[holding answer 9 may 1995]:* The FCO understands there are no commercially available means to prevent cloning. For its part, the Department has initiated thorough checks of itemised billing to ensure unusual call patterns and excessive costs are highlighted and investigated. Additionally, international calls are barred wherever possible.

**Mr. Donohoe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many mobile telephones being utilised by his Department have been cloned during the last 12 months. [23425]

**Mr. Goodlad** *[holding answer 9 May 1995]:* This Department has had 10 mobile telephones cloned between November 1994 and April 1995. The ODA has had none.

**Mr. Donohoe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what costs his Department has incurred during the last 12 months as a result of cloning of mobile telephones being utilised by his Department, with particular reference to the making of unauthorised calls. [23491]

**Mr. Goodlad** *[holding answer 9 May 1995]:* This Department has not incurred any costs for the unauthorised use or reprogramming of cloned telephones. All identified costs—approximately £4,000—have been absorbed by the cellular telephone companies.

### Rwanda

**Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to China in respect of arms sales to Rwanda in breach of the United Nations Security Council resolutions. [23616]

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** None.

The UN sanctions committee has received no evidence of any arms sales by China to Rwanda in breach of the UN arms embargo.

### Central Africa

**Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the proposed conference on regional problems in central Africa, as proposed by the UK at the United Nations Council, will take place. [23614]

**Mr. Douglas Hogg:** We recognise the important role of the countries of the region in the search for solutions to this problem in central Africa. The UN Secretary-General is pursuing proposals for a regional conference on peace and security in the Great Lakes region, but no date has yet been set.

### GCHQ Wartime Archive

**Mr. Allason:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to authorise the transfer of all GCHQ's remaining wartime archive to Bletchley park. [23414]

**Mr. Hurd:** None. Bletchley park is not an authorised repository for public records. GCHQ will continue to review its holdings of the wartime archives of the Government code and cypher school, for possible release through the Public Record Office.

## LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

### Historical Documents

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Lord President of the Council what special training is given to persons who have responsibility for assessing the historical significance of documents held by his Department.

**Mr. Newton:** Training in assessing the historical significance of departmental records is carried out under the guidance of the Keeper of Public Records. It is provided in a number of different ways, including courses on the appraisal of records and through conferences and seminars arranged by the Public Record Office.

## DUCHY OF LANCASTER

### AIDS-HIV Research

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the research sponsored by his Department through the Medical Research Council, and the amount spent on each project for *(a)* AIDS-HIV prevention and *(b)* AIDS-HIV treatment for the last five years for which figures are available and if he will make a statement. [22668]

**Mr. Horam:** The overall expenditure figures on AIDS research over the last five years are:

| *F/Y* | *£k* |
|---|---|
| 1989–90 | 6,200 |
| 1990–91 | 13,300 |
| 1991–92 | 15,900 |
| 1992–93 | 15,300 |
| 1993–94 | 16,200 |

The nature of the research is such that a split between prevention and treatment is artificial, as many of the research projects cover both aspects. The overall figures do not therefore draw a distinction between the two.

I have today placed copies of lists of the HIV and AIDS research projects supported by the MRC in the Libraries of both Houses. These lists show the titles of the projects, by whom they were carried out and the resources allocated. The list indicates both current projects and projects already completed, indicated by +.

## SOCIAL SECURITY

### Discretionary Social Fund

**Mr. Stephen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what changes he intends to make to the discretionary social fund, in the light of the changes to the funeral payments regulations announced on 9 May, and if he will make a statement. [24173]

**Mr. Roger Evans:** We are introducing minor improvements to the Secretary of State's directions and guidance to clarify the help available for funeral expenses from the discretionary fund. The revised directions clarify those circumstances where applicants will have access to loans for funeral expenses.

Details of the amendments and a revised copy of the Secretary of State's directions and guidance to take effect from 5 June will be placed in the Library.

### Telephones

**Mr. Donohoe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps his Department has taken to prevent the cloning of telephones being utilised by his Department; and if his Department has discussed this matter with any official agencies. [23463]

**Mr. Hague** *[holding answer 9 May 1995]:* Cloning is a general problem associated with the use of analogue cellphones. Minimising the risk of cloning would be achieved by moving from analogue to digital cellphones, using the global system for mobile communications, which has wide coverage within the UK and Europe.

The Department at this stage has not taken any positive steps to prevent cloning and before we do, the cost of the conversion from analogue to digital cellphones must be weighed against an assessment of the cloning exposure.

The Department has not at this stage discussed this matter with any official agencies.

## TRADE AND INDUSTRY

### EU Standards, Testing and Certification

**Mr. Amess:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he intends to publish the results of his Department's study on standards, testing and certification barriers in the non-harmonised areas of the single market. [24172]

**Mr. Ian Taylor:** The generic study on standards, testing and certification barriers in non-harmonised areas of the single market is one of a number of studies which arose from my Department's single market compliance unit business plan. Two hundred and fifty businesses and around 100 trade associations were asked whether they had experienced problems in this area and the results of the survey were analysed to discover the nature of the problems and how they would best be tackled.

Our investigations show that many companies are successfully exporting to other member states, but they confirm that problems are faced by some companies and suggest that these problems may be more significant in certain sectors. Specific problems in exporting to six member states were identified and as might be expected from the size of their markets Germany, in particular, and France specified much more often than other member states, although the numbers of problems identified were still low in absolute terms. Analysis of the problems identified supports the twin approach to resolving conflicts—bilaterally and through direct approaches to the European Commission—as indeed is my Department's usual practice. There is also a need to encourage industry to utilise the benefits of possible agreements under the auspices of the European Organisation for Testing and Certification and to stimulate the work of the European Co-operation for Accreditation of Laboratories and European Accreditation of Certification.

Our investigations have confirmed that there are gaps in mutual recognition which are detracting from the

benefits of the single market. I have, therefore, written to the European Commission with the results of the study and I will be raising the study with fellow European Ministers in the Internal Market Council.

My Department's single market compliance unit will try to resolve, with firms, specific problems identified by the study and my Department's standards policy unit will help to publicise the ways in which mutual recognition may be achieved.

I have placed in the Library of the House a copy of the report of the study which has been issued.

### Telecommunications

**Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he supports the European Commission's proposals to allow cable television companies within the European Community to offer telecommunications services; and if he will support action to allow other telecommunications operators to provide entertainment services. [24171]

**Mr. Ian Taylor:** The Government welcome the Commission proposals to allow cable TV companies to offer telecommunication services, which would bring other member states into line with existing UK practice. The Commission proposals, which are currently subject to public consultation, would not affect member states' existing rules on the provision of entertainment services, nor is there any sign that the Commission would be willing to extend its proposals in this way. The Government would strongly oppose any such action. UK Government policy remains as set out in Command Paper 2734, published in November 1994.

### Insurance Companies

**Mr. French:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he is taking to ensure that insurance company orphan funds accrue to policy holders. [23265]

**Mr. Jonathan Evans:** One of the Department's priorities is to ensure that the balance between policyholders' and shareholders' interests is not affected, as I explained in my answer to the hon. Member for Shoreham (Mr. Stephen) on 24 February 1995, *Official Report*, column *362*.

### Fireworks

**Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if children aged under 16 years will still be prohibited from purchasing fireworks which do not contain gunpowder after the coming into force of the Firework (Safety) Revocation Regulations 1995. [23030]

**Mr. Jonathan Evans** *[holding answer 9 May 1995]:* The supply of fireworks to children apparently under the age of 16 will continue to be prohibited with the coming into force of the Fireworks (Safety) (Revocation) Regulations 1995, by virtue of section 31 of the Explosives Act 1875 as amended, irrespective of whether fireworks contain gunpowder or other explosive substances.

### Inward Investment

**Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proposals he has to encourage inward investment to the United Kingdom. [22252]

**Mr. Eggar:** My Department's Invest in Britain Bureau runs a comprehensive programme for promoting the UK overseas, including company visits, advertising, mail shots, seminars and missions. Within the UK, the IBB will be working with Govnerment offices, regional agencies and others to encourage more systematic cultivation of opportunities for securing new investment by existing companies. The resources of the IBB have also been strengthened with the appointment of a new chief executive from the private sector and a regional director for the far east.

## PRIME MINISTER

### Committee on Standards in Public Life

**Mr. John Greenway:** To ask the Prime Minister when he expects to receive the first report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life; and if he will make a statement. [24306]

**The Prime Minister:** The first report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life, under the chairmanship of Lord Nolan, is being published today as Command Paper 2850. I should like to express my thanks to Lord Nolan and his colleagues for the way in which they have discharged the initial part of the remit which I announced to the House in October. It is welcome that they have reached unanimous recommendations based on open proceedings, and having taken oral and written evidence from a wide cross-section of opinion. The oral evidence they have taken is included in volume II of the report, and written submissions are to be made available at the Public Record Office.

Lord Nolan has arranged to send a copy of his Committee's report to every Member of the House.

I believe it is important to maintain the highest possible standards and confidence in public life. I therefore welcome the work the committee has done.

I accept the broad thrust of the committee's recommendations in so far as they are addressed to the Government. We shall give the report the close study it deserves and then make a detailed response.

The recommendations which are addressed to this House are, of course, a matter for the House itself to consider, and my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will arrange an early opportunity for debate.

### Engagements

**Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 11 May. [22391]

**Sir Peter Tapsell:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 11 May. [22393]

**The Prime Minister:** This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

### Pay Review Bodies

**Mr. Coe:** To ask the Prime Minister what is the current membership of the public sector pay review bodies. [24307]

**The Prime Minister:** The current membership, with effect from 1 April 1995, is listed:

*Senior Salaries Review Body*
Sir Michael Perry CBE (Chairman)
Professor George Bain
Mr. Gordon Hourston
Sir Anthony Wilson
Sir Sydney Lipworth QC
Mrs. Rosemary Day
Miss Patricia Mann
Mrs. Yve Newbold
Mr. Mark Sheldon
Mrs. Beverley Bernard

*Armed Forces Pay Review Body*
Mr. Gordon Hourston (Chairman)
Mr. Michael Bolton
Mrs. Dorothy Venables
Mr. John Cox CBE
Mr. John Crosby
Air Chief Marshal Sir Roger Palin KCB OBE
Mr. Guy Neely
Sir Gavin Laird CBE (from 1 July 1995)

*Review Body on Nursing Staff, Midwives, Health Visitors and Professions Allied to Medicine*
Mr. Michael Bett CBE (Chairman)[1]
Miss Annie Mackie OBE
Professor Gillian Raab
Ms Ruth Lea
Mrs. Sheila Gleig
Mrs. Anne Dean
Mr. Lyndon Hadden
Mr. Gareth Griffiths

[1] Following his appointment as First Civil Service Commissioner, Mr. Bett has indicated that he will be stepping down as chairman of the review body once a successor has been appointed.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

### Epilepsy

**Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many deaths were attributed to epilepsy in Northern Ireland in each year since 1990 in each health board area for which information is available. [22841]

**Sir John Wheeler:** The number of deaths registered from, or related to, epilepsy in Northern Ireland for each year from 1990 in each health board area are as follows. Deaths are recorded by date of registration and not by date of occurrence.

| | 1990 | 1991 | 1992 | 1993 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Epilepsy as underlying cause of death* | | | | |
| Eastern health and social services board | 4 | 3 | 6 | 9 |
| Northern health and social services board | 7 | 6 | 2 | 4 |
| Southern health and social services board | 4 | 3 | 6 | 3 |
| Western health and social services board | 4 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Northern Ireland | 19 | 14 | 15 | 19 |
| *Epilepsy as an associated cause of death* | | | | |
| Eastern health and social services board | 16 | 13 | 13 | 17 |
| Northern health and social services board | 17 | 6 | 13 | 11 |
| Southern health and social services board | 3 | 8 | 10 | 7 |
| Western health and social services board | 5 | 3 | 12 | 7 |
| Northern Ireland | 41 | 30 | 48 | 42 |

*Note.*
1994 figures will not be available until June.

### Belfast

**Dr. Hendron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the aims and objectives of the Belfast urban area plan 2001; and how these objectives fit into the aims of the strategy for making Belfast work published in March. [23105]

**Mr. Moss:** The aims and objectives of the Belfast urban area plan 2001 are set out on pages 7 and 16 of the plan, a copy of which is available in the Library. The main focus of the making Belfast work strategy is to increase opportunities for residents of MBW areas to secure employment and to improve their quality of life. These aims complement those set out in the Belfast urban area plan 2001.

**Dr. Hendron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how relevant the Belfast urban area plan 2001 now is; if the Department of the Environment proposes to undertake a review of the plan; and if the public will be invited to put forward their views. [23106]

**Mr. Moss:** The Belfast urban area plan 2001 remains the statutory plan for Belfast. The Department is currently carrying out a reassessment of development land to ascertain the anticipated requirement for a further release of land reserved for housing in the second phase of the plan. When the draft proposals are published, this will afford the public the opportunity to make representations and a public local inquiry may be held for the purposes of hearing those representations which cannot be resolved.

**Dr. Hendron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how the Department of the Environment is co-ordinating the overall improvement process in Belfast and the different elements of that process; and how elected representatives are involved in these matters. [23107]

**Mr. Moss:** The Department of the Environment co-ordinates the overall improvement process in Belfast through the Belfast development office and the making Belfast work initiative. The Belfast development office has responsibility for physical development in close consultation with the Department's planning service. The making Belfast work initiative acts as a catalyst in providing funding to the public, private and voluntary sectors for social and economic programmes in disadvantaged areas.

Elected representatives are involved in these matters through direct contact and correspondence with officials and Ministers and through the Department's statutory obligations to consult Belfast city council on planning matters.

### Driver and Vehicle Licensing

**Mr. Robathan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what performance targets have been set for Driver and Vehicle Licensing (Northern Ireland) in 1995–96. [24048]

**Mr. Moss:** For 1995–96 the following key performance targets have been set for the agency:

To meet an overall efficiency gain of 2 per cent.

To reduce the unit cost per vehicle excise enforcement case by 0.5 per cent. in real terms compared to 1994–95.

To dispatch 94 per cent. of registration books for new vehicles in 16 working days from receipt.

To dispatch 91 per cent. of refunds of vehicle excise duty in 11 working days from receipt.

To dispatch 93 per cent. of vehicle excise licences in five working days from receipt of postal applications.

To dispatch 93 per cent. of duplicate vehicle registration books in six working days from receipt of applications.

To dispatch 93 per cent. of ordinary driving licences in 11 working days of receipt of applications.

To dispatch 96 per cent. of vocational driving licences in 10 working days from receipt of applications.

To dispatch 94 per cent. of provisional driving licences in nine working days from receipt of applications.

To dispatch substantive replies to 95 per cent. of written enquiries for information from the drivers and vehicles registers in four working days from receipt.

To limit maximum waiting time at local vehicle licensing offices to 25 minutes during peak periods—the first eight and last two working days of each month—and 10 minutes at other periods.

To limit the error rate—errors on any item sent out by the agency—to a maximum of 0.5 per cent. of total agency output.

### Agricultural Occupancy Conditions

**Mr. Robathan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he has taken to review the position regarding agricultural occupancy conditions. [24049]

**Mr. Moss:** Following a review of procedures it has been agreed that the "four-year rule", which requires that enforcement proceedings can be initiated only within four years of a breach, should apply to agricultural occupancy conditions. I have also decided to appoint a consultant to advise on alternatives to the use of occupancy conditions. It is expected that the consultants' report will lead to a further review of policy.

## DEFENCE

### Queen's Birthday Parade

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the estimated total cost of this year's Queen's birthday parade. [22938]

**Mr. Soames:** No additional costs are incurred for the men and horses taking part in the parade as they are already funded. Costs will be incurred for hired road transport, and these are estimated at £12,000. There are other additional costs such as drycleaning of ceremonial uniforms and accommodation services, including facilities, rations and communications. Full details are not recorded separately, however, and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

### Army Deployment

**Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the strength of the British Army in Northern Ireland at the time of the IRA ceasefire; what reductions in manpower strength have taken place since then; and what is the current strength of the British Army in Northern Ireland. [23042]

**Mr. Soames:** In August 1994, there were some 17,000 soldiers deployed in support of the Royal Ulster Constabulary. This figure included 12 major units deployed to the Province in the infantry role and six battalions of the Royal Irish Regiment. Since the IRA ceasefire, a sub-unit of some 140 personnel has been withdrawn and its task reassigned to other units already in the Province, and two major units have been relocated to their home bases outside Northern Ireland but remain available to the General Officer Commanding and can return at short notice if required. These adjustments have brought the number of soldiers deployed to the Province to some 16,000.

### Nuclear Weapons

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) pursuant to his answer of 28 April, *Official Report*, column 772, what is the basis upon which the figure of a 14 per cent. reduction in the total stockpile of United Kingdom nuclear weapons is determined; if the stockpile of United Kingdom nuclear weapons is equivalent to the number of warheads actually deployed; and if he will make a statement; [23108]

(2) pursuant to his oral answer of 28 March to the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) *Official Report*, column 817, if the figure referred to of a 21 per cent. reduction in nuclear warheads is based on a comparison of the total number of nuclear warheads in the United Kingdom's stockpile. [23109]

**Mr. Soames:** The basis of the figures for reductions in our nuclear deterrent is explained in the footnotes to figure 6 on page 39 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1995".

**Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many of the four Trident submarines will be deployed with nuclear weapons at any one time. [23110]

**Mr. Soames:** It is our policy to maintain at least one submarine at sea on deterrent patrol at any time.

### Arms Sales Teams (Indonesia)

**Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the dates when Army sales teams have been deployed in Indonesia since 1 January 1990. [23244]

**Mr. Freeman:** Army sales teams were deployed in Indonesia in July and August 1990 and again in February and March 1992.

### Arms Sales (Indonesia)

**Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Provan (Mr. Wray), of 24 April, *Official Report*, column *394*, what defence equipment whose sale to Nigeria was agreed before June 1993 was delivered after that time. [23256]

**Mr. Freeman:** It is our general policy not to reveal details of individual exports of defence equipment. However, the 1994 UK return to the UN register of conventional arms, now in the House of Commons Library, provides information on transfers of defence equipment within seven broad categories.

**Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on which date he approved exports of Hawk 200 series aircraft to Indonesia. [23249]

**Mr. Freeman:** The approval of export licences is a matter for my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade. It is not the practice to give details of approvals or denials of specific export licence applications, but I can assure the hon. Member that such export licence applications would be considered against the background of an assurance from the Indonesian authorities that Hawk aircraft will not be used against the civilian population or for repressive purposes.

### UK Military Training and Assistance Scheme

**Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the annual cost to his Department of the UK military training and assistance scheme in each of the last five financial years. [23243]

**Mr. Soames:** The UK military training and assistance scheme is controlled by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, which has primary responsibility for funding military assistance. The MOD does not bear any of the costs of UKMTAS. On occasion, however, and where the aims serve defence interests, the MOD agrees to waive the costs of training provided to foreign Governments. The total of these waivers in the last five years is as follows:

| *Year* | *£ million* |
|---|---|
| 1990–91 | 4.6 |
| 1991–92 | 4.6 |
| 1992–93 | 5.9 |
| 1993–94 | 5.1 |
| 1994–95 | [1]5.6 |

[1] Forecast outturn.

In addition, some £70,000 was spent in 1993–94 and a further £173,000 in 1994–95 in support of the United Kingdom's programme of bilateral defence contact with central and eastern Europe.

Details of the assistance provided are confidential between Governments.

### British Defence Advisory Team

**Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will give the dates when elements of the British defence advisory team have been deployed in Indonesia since 1 January 1990. [23245]

**Mr. Freeman:** The British defence advisory team visited Indonesia in October 1992.

### Defence Export Services Organisation

**Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence who was the Head of Defence Export Services Organisation in 1991; what was the duration of their contract and their annual salary including bonuses; and from which organisation they were seconded. [23233]

**Mr. Freeman:** Sir Alan Thomas was the Head of Defence Export Services Organisation in 1991. The duration of his contract on secondment from Raytheon Europe Ltd. was five years and his annual salary in 1994, the year he left the Department, was £131,674 plus a performance bonus of up to an annual maximum of £30,000.

**Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the net and gross cost of the Defence Export Services Organisation in 1991–92. [23257]

**Mr. Freeman:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) on 20 April 1995, *Official Report*, column *228*.

### Land Mines

**Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library a revised list of the criteria he uses for classifying land mines by type. [23067]

**Mr. Freeman:** The NATO standard definition of a mine is

"an explosive or material, normally encased, designed to destroy or damage ground vehicles, boats or aircraft, or designed to wound, kill or otherwise incapacitate personnel. It may be detonated by the action of its victim, by the passage of time, or by controlled means".

There is no NATO standard definition of an anti-tank or anti-personnel land mine: my Department considers an anti-tank land mine to be one which is designed specifically to target tanks or other vehicles; and an anti-personnel land mine to be one designed specifically to target people.

### Defence Equipment Exports

**Mr. Rooker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many staff in his Department and companies owned by his Department work on assisting with the export of defence equipment; and how many of these staff have served in the armed forces. [23359]

**Mr. Freeman:** The Defence Export Services Organisation, which includes the Disposal Sales Agency, exists to help British manufacturers market and sell their products abroad, complementing the wider range of services offered by the DTI. There are 691 staff in the DESO, of whom 233 are serving military personnel, and a further five are retired officers. Records of previous military service, including national service, are not held centrally. IMS Ltd. is wholly owned by the Secretary of State for Defence, but has ceased trading.

### National Vocational Qualifications

**Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many, and what proportion of vacancies advertised by his Department, and by each of his Department's agencies, in the last three years have listed the attainment of NVQs as an acceptable entry requirement; and, of those, how many have required (i) level 1 NVQs, (ii) level 2 NVQs, (iii) level 3 NVQs and (iv) other level NVQs. [22976]

**Mr. Freeman:** Since 1991, levels 1 and 2 NVQs in business administration have been recognised qualifications for entry to some junior non-managerial grades in my Department. Recruitment of more junior grades is undertaken by a large number of personnel management authorities throughout the country. Their individual recruitment activities are not co-ordinated centrally, and no central records are maintained of vacancies advertised. Information on the number and percentage of vacancies listing the NVQs as an acceptable criterion of these grades could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Level 3 and 4 NVQs in information technology have been accepted as an entry criterion for recruitment to recently advertised specialist IT executive officer posts. The scope for recognising a wider range of NVQs for recruitment to industrial and non-industrial posts is under review.

Recruitment of executive officers is undertaken centrally. The current executive officer (IT) recruitment campaign aims to fill 90 posts which equate to 100 per cent. of the total EO(IT) posts advertised by the Department this year.

### VE Day and VJ Day

**Mr. Sykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what arrangements have been made for the funding within the defence budget for the national commemorations of the 50th anniversary of both VE day and VJ day. [24051]

**Mr. Soames:** Parliamentary approval for this new service is being sought in the 1995–96 supply estimates for defence: operational and support costs—class I, vote 1. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure of £5,800,000 will be met by a repayable advance from the Contingencies Fund.

### Defence Analytical Services Agency

**Mr. Sykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what performance targets have been set for the Defence Analytical Services Agency for 1995–96. [24052]

**Mr. Soames:** Key targets have been set for the chief executive of the Defence Analytical Services Agency for this financial year and beyond. The targets build on the progress already made by the agency since it formed in July 1992 and are as follows:

*Delivery of customer services*

About three quarters of the agency's business is now covered by service level agreements with customers, which set out the targets and standards for the level of service, timeliness and quality of work. For the remaining parts of the business, for which service level agreements are not appropriate, project agreements are in place. Key targets are:

(a) To meet at least 95 per cent. of the timeliness and quality targets in the service level agreements and project agreements.

(b) For all parts of the business, to achieve in the annual customer satisfaction survey at least 90 per cent. of customers expressing themselves satisfied or better with the timeliness, quality of work and helpfulness of staff.

(c) To improve the quality of published output and to devise a methodology to demonstrate the improvement.

*Efficiency and use of resources*

The agency will be expected to find efficiency savings of 2.5 per cent. to meet the targets laid down in the departmental efficiency plan. The agency will also be required to develop a robust system for the Department to produce location statistics for service and civilian personnel.

### Sunken Ship Montgomerie (Explosives)

**Dr. Spink:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what contracts or tenders have been considered in relation to clearing, removing or otherwise dealing with explosives on the ship Montgomerie sunk off Canvey island; with what results; and if he will make a statement; [22619]

(2) when the explosives on the ship Montgomerie sunk off Canvey island were last inspected; what were the results of that inspection; and how often inspections are undertaken; [22618]

(3) what assessment he has made of the risk posed to nearby residents, shipping or fishermen, by the explosives on the ship Montgomerie, sunk off Canvey island; and if he will make a statement. [22620]

**Mr. Norris:** I have been asked to reply.

These are operational matters for the Coastguard agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to my hon. Friend.

*Letter from C. J. Harris to Dr. Robert Spink, dated 11 May 1995:*

The Secretary of State for Transport has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Questions as these deal with operational matters, for which I have responsibility as Chief Executive.

PQ 1660/94/95. The last survey was completed in September 1993. The Viscount Goschen, Minister for Aviation and Shipping, sent you and other interested MPs copies of the survey report on 26 October 1994 and copies were also placed in the Library of the House of Commons. I am arranging for a further copy to be sent to you.

The survey found no evidence of any major change to the condition of the wreck and concluded that there was no reason to change the policy of not disturbing it.

The wreck is surveyed biennially. Another contracted survey will take place this summer supervised by the Ministry of Defence, with the agreement of the Port of Sheerness. When the details are finalised I will write to you, to other local MPs and local authorities in the area to explain what is happening.

PQ 1661/94/95. Expert opinion, based on the information available about the types of explosives on board, is that the risk of an explosion is remote, and that the best way to keep the risk to an absolute minimum is to leave the wreck undisturbed. The site of the wreck is designated a prohibited area under the Protection of Wrecks Act 1973.

PQ 1673/94/94. No contracts have been considered in relation to disturbing the munitions. Expert opinion is that the risk of an explosion would significantly increase if the wreck were to be disturbed by moving its contents or otherwise dealing with the explosives.

## HOME DEPARTMENT

### Witness Support Schemes

**Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects there to be witness support schemes in every magistrates court. [22838]

**Mr. Maclean** *[holding answer 10 May 1995]:* There are no plans to set up witness support schemes in magistrates courts. Our priority is to implement the royal commission recommendation to establish witness support schemes at all Crown courts. Some 40 schemes are

already in operation, and additional Home Office funding last year and this will enable victim support to complete the witness service at all 78 Crown court centres by the end of 1995.

### Police Patrol Vehicles (Accidents)

**Ms Jowell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 4 April, *Official Report,* column *1019,* about road traffic accidents involving police vehicles, how many of the accidents which resulted in civilian injuries in each year involved basic drivers. [23331]

**Mr. Maclean:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave on 4 April, *Official Report,* column *1019.*

I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that the number of accidents involving basic drivers which resulted in civilian injuries is as follows:

| *Year* | *Accidents involving civilian injuries (total)* | *Advanced drivers* | *Basic drivers* | *Others* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1991 | 303 | 123 | 44 | 136 |
| 1992 | 294 | 121 | 52 | 121 |
| 1993 | 327 | 136 | 51 | 140 |
| 1994 | 289 | 113 | 29 | 147 |

These figures do not include accidents in which a police vehicle was in the vicinity but not directly involved.

### Passport Applications

**Mr. Parry:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the time it takes to process applications for a British passport; and if he will make a statement. [23658]

**Mr. Nicholas Baker** *[holding answer 10 May 1995]:* On Wednesday 26 April the turnround times for processing properly completed, straightforward applications were:

Belfast 6 days
Glasgow 7 days
Liverpool 7 days
London 2 days
Newport 6 days
Peterborough 5 days

All the Passport Agency's key targets for 1994–95 were met. This resulted in a reduction in the overall average turnround time from just under eight days to just under seven days.

### Secure Mental Hospitals (Manslaughter Detainees)

**Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many defendants who pleaded guilty to manslaughter were sentenced to detention in a secure mental hospital in each of the last 10 years: and for how long each of them was detained. [23525]

**Mr. Michael Forsyth** *[holding answer 10 May 1995]:* Information on the plea entered by defendants is not available centrally for those sentenced to detention in a secure mental hospital. The following information is based on those restricted patients with a hospital order who were sentenced for manslaughter.

*Patients with hospital order for manslaughter, by years to release*

*England and Wales* *Number of patients*

| *Sentence year* | *Less than one year* | *1 up to 2 years* | *2 up to 3 years* | *3 up to 4 years* | *4 up to 5 years* | *5 up to 6 years* | *6 up to 7 years* | *7 up to 8 years* | *8 up to 9 years* | *Remains on population* | *Total* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1985 | — | 1 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 13 | 28 |
| 1986 | — | 2 | 3 | — | — | 1 | 2 | 1 | — | 14 | 24 |
| 1987 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 3 | — | — | — | 19 | 33 |
| 1988 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 2 | — | — | 14 | 31 |
| 1989 | 1 | 6 | 1 | 3 | — | — | — | — | — | 23 | 34 |
| 1990 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 5 | — | — | — | — | — | 22 | 32 |
| 1991 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 1 | — | — | — | — | — | 26 | 33 |
| 1992 | — | 2 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | 29 | 31 |
| 1993 | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | 30 | 30 |
| 1994– | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | 24[1] | 24[1] |

[1] Provisional.

*Note:*
In 1988 the total includes one person for whom details are not available.

### Civil Defence

**Mrs. Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list *(a)* existing civil defence facilities currently in operation, *(b)* the final cost of construction in each case, *(c)* the numbers employed at each facility and *(d)* the numbers entitled to use each facility in the event of war. [23170]

**Mr. Nicholas Baker:** There are no existing civil defence facilities currently in operation. The remaining former regional government headquarters, United Kingdom Warning and Monitoring Organisation monitoring posts, and United Kingdom Warning and Monitoring Organisation group controls, are awaiting disposal, most by sale on the open market. Prior to commencement of the disposal programme there were 17 RGHQs, 26 UKWMO group controls and 874 UKWMO monitoring posts.

The cost of construction of Chilmark and Ashdown Forest RGHQs, the only two purpose-built establishments, was approximately £2.1 million, in 1986, and £3 million, in 1989, respectively. Information relating to the cost of construction of all the other facilities either is not available or could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The numbers designated to operate these facilities in the event of war would have ranged from two to three at the United Kingdom Warning and Monitoring Organisation posts to the 60 at the United Kingdom Warning and Monitoring Organisation group controls and 150 at the larger RGHQs.

**Mrs. Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further assessment he has made of the implications on civil defence in the United Kingdom arising from the peace dividend; and if he will make a statement. [23169]

**Mr. Nicholas Baker:** Civil defence arrangements are made in the light of assessments of the risks faced by the United Kingdom. There has been no significant change in that assessment of risk since November 1992, when the present arrangements were set in place.

### Animal Procedures Committee

**Mr. Congdon:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what appointments he has made recently to the Animal Procedures Committee. [24310]

**Mr. Nicholas Baker:** I have appointed the following persons to be members of the Animal Procedures Committee for four years with effect from 1 May:

(i) *Miss Cindy Millburn*, special projects director, World Society for the Protection of Animals.

(ii) *Dr. Jacqueline Southee*, manager, In-vitro Toxicology, Microbiological Associates Ltd.

(iii) *Mr. Les Ward*, director, Advocates for Animals.

### Cycling (Footpaths)

**Mr. Timms:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions there have been for cycling on footpaths in *(a)* the London borough of Newham, and *(b)* London, in each of the past five years for which records are available. [23154]

**Mr. Maclean:** The information is given in the table. 1994 data will not be available until autumn 1995.

*Number of defendants prosecuted for cycling on footpaths[1] within the Metropolitan police, City of Londonand Newham areas and England and Wales 1989–1993*

| *Area* | *1989* | *1990* | *1991* | *1992* | *1993* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Police Force Area* | | | | | |
| Metropolitan Police District | 5 | 8 | 31 | 12 | 35 |
| City of London | — | — | 3 | 4 | 3 |
| *Newham Area* | | | | | |
| Stratford Petty Sessional Division | — | — | — | — | — |
| West Ham Petty Sessional Division | — | — | — | — | — |
| England and Wales | 453 | 483 | 333 | 313 | 291 |

[1] An offence under the Highway Act 1985, section 72, and the Metropolitan Police Act 1939, section 54(7) and byelaws.

### Police Training

**Mr. Mike O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are his estimates for the cost of training needed to enable the police in England and Wales to be fully aware of the provisions of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994; and what funding has been made available to police authorities for such training. [23050]

**Mr. Maclean:** The extent to which police officers need to be trained in relation to the provisions of this Act is a matter for individual chief officers to determine. Centrally produced training material has been made available, free of charge, to all forces; the costs of delivering any training considered necessary will be met from existing police budgets.

### Driving without Insurance

**Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many of those convicted of driving without insurance were immediately disqualified in each of the last three years; [23268]

(2) how many of those convicted of driving without insurance received an endorsement of six or more penalty points in each of the last three years. [23267]

**Mr. Maclean:** The following table gives the available information which relates to the number of convictions for "using a motor vehicle uninsured against third-party risks" in England and Wales for the years 1991 to 1993. Figures for 1994 are not available.

*Convictions for using a motor vehicle uninsured against third-party risks*

| | *Total disqualifications imposed* | *Endorsements–without disqualification—with six or more penalty points* |
|---|---|---|
| 1991 | 19,387 | 108,638 |
| 1992 | 20,762 | 125,771 |
| 1993 | 25,570 | 143,818 |

### Immigration

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the application made to the United Kingdom post in Islamabad by Mr. Mohammad Rashid and Mrs. Anwar Jahn Rashid—ref: V95/000618—to visit the United Kingdom was referred to him; when it was received; if a recommendation has now been made; and if he will make a statement. [23052]

**Mr. Nicholas Baker:** This application was not referred to the Home Office for decision or recommendation, but for information to assist the entry clearance officer to reach a decision. The request was received by telex on 24 January, and information was dispatched on 6 March.

### Identity Cards

**Mr. Mike O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of how frequently identity cards with photographs would need to be replaced. [23068]

**Mr. Nicholas Baker:** We shall be publishing a consultation document about identity cards soon which, among other things, will address this issue.

### Liquor Licensing

**Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the number of *(a)* public houses and *(b)* other licensed properties in (i) 1980, (ii) 1985, (iii) 1990 and (iv) 1994. [23269]

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** The available information on licensed premises is published in table 1 of the Home Office "Statistical Bulletin", issue 4/93, "Liquor Licensing Statistics, England and Wales, July 1991–June 1992", a copy of which is in the Library. Information on

liquor licensing is collected only once every three years on the licences in force in the year of collection and in the previous year.

### Police Deaths

**Mr. Mike O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list names of persons convicted of killing police officers since 1960 *(a)* who are still serving imprisonment together with the date when they are next considered for release on licence and *(b)* who have been released, with the date of that release; and if he will state for each offender the identity of the officer killed and the dates of the crime and of the sentence. [22896]

**Mr. Michael Forsyth:** I will write to the hon. Member.

### Community Service Orders

**Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many offenders have served more than two community service orders; and what plans he has to set a maximum on the number of such orders that can be served before a custodial sentence must be imposed. [22520]

**Mr. Nicholas Baker:** A sample of offenders convicted in 1993 suggests that about 3,700 who receive a community service order had been sentenced to community service on at least two previous occasions. It is for the sentencing court to decide whether or not a custodial sentence is justified in the light of all the circumstances before it, having regard to the provisions of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 as amended. Those provisions enable the court to take account of the offender's failure to respond to previous sentences.

**Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps his Department is taking to improve community service orders and to ensure that breaches of such orders are properly punished. [22521]

**Mr. Nicholas Baker:** On 9 March, my right hon. and learned Friend published revised national standards for the supervision of offenders in the community, which tighten up the way in which community service orders must be run and enforced. A copy of the 1995 standards is in the Library.

### Criminal Injuries Compensation

**Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to introduce legislation dealing with criminal injuries compensation. [24309]

**Mr. Howard:** I have today introduced the Criminal Injuries Compensation Bill.

The Bill provides a power to establish a new criminal injuries compensation scheme. It also repeals the provisions in the Criminal Justice Act 1988, which, if implemented, would have put the old, common law damages scheme on to a statutory footing.

Following the judgment of the Judicial Committee of the House of Lords, which was delivered on 5 April, I have been giving very careful thought to the arrangements which should be made for compensating those who have the misfortune to be injured as a result of a crime of violence.

The judgment related to the method of introduction of the tariff scheme, not its merits. The effect of the judgment was to require the 1990 common law damages scheme to be reinstated in place of the tariff based approach introduced on 1 April 1994. The costs of the common law damages scheme have risen very substantially since the scheme was first introduced in 1964 and more than doubled in real terms between 1987–88 and 1993–94. Although improvements have been made in administration of the scheme, we believe that a tariff-based approach offers greater scope for further improvement and the speedier settlement of cases. I remain of the view, therefore, that steps need to be taken to constrain future expenditure and to ensure that a quicker service is provided. This cannot be achieved within the framework of a system based entirely upon common law principles. I remain therefore of the view that the 1990 common law damages scheme should be replaced by a new tariff-based approach.

I have, however, considered very carefully the concerns which have been expressed about the effect which such an approach may have on those who are most seriously injured. We all have immense sympathy for such victims and the Government are anxious to do all that they can to safeguard the position of victims. I have therefore come to the view that the tariff-based approach should be enhanced to provide payment for loss of earnings and special care for those who are incapacitated for more than 28 weeks—the period during which statutory sick pay is payable. I also propose that there should be provision for loss of dependency/support in fatal cases. In addition, I propose that structured settlements should be available: these will greatly help those receiving the higher awards by providing a guaranteed, index-linked, tax-free income for life, thus considerably increasing the net benefit of the award for many victims.

I believe that a scheme of this sort will be fair while at the same time providing a mechanism for controlling future expenditure. Further details of the proposed scheme are set out in a paper entitled "Criminal Injuries Compensation: proposals for a Tariff Based Scheme" which has been placed in the Library and the Vote Office.

Ours is the most generous compensation scheme in the world. We pay out more compensation than all other European countries added together. That will remain the case under our new proposals.

## TRANSPORT

### Aircraft (Electronic Interference)

**Sir Peter Fry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will ask the Civil Aviation Authority to undertake an urgent investigation into the interference in aircraft navigation and other systems in flight caused by *(a)* laptop computer and *(b)* other electrical devices. [23143]

**Mr. Norris:** The Civil Aviation Authority participates, with the Defence Research Agency and representatives of the airline and aerospace manufacturing industry, in the Electro Magnetic Compatibility Club. The assistance and advice of the club has been sought on the subject of passengers' portable electronic equipment. The CAA's research programme currently includes a project to extend this work to include passengers' mobile telephones.

### Illegal Operations Working Group

**Mr. Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what initiatives the illegal operations working group has taken forward over the last 12 months; and what recommendations it has published. [24050]

**Mr. Norris:** Initiatives which the group has been taking forward are detailed in an annual report which has today been circulated to those organisations with an interest in goods vehicle enforcement. A copy of the group's 1994 report has been placed in the Library of the House.

## ENVIRONMENT

### Conservation Sites

**Mr. Whittingdale:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the consequences of farm land being designated as a special area of conservation under the EU habitats directive. [22139]

**Mr. Atkins:** The regulations implementing the habitats directive are based in the existing provisions applying to sites of special scientific interest. In the vast majority of cases, the nature conservation interests for which sites on land will be selected as special areas of conservation will be very similar to those for which these sites will already be protected as SSSIs. In most cases, management measures which have conserved these sites in the past as SSSIs will continue to be appropriate when they become SACs.

The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 introduce the following measures for European sites, including SACs:

a duty on the statutory nature conservation agencies not to give consent to potentially damaging operations which will adversely affect the integrity of the site, and to offer a management agreement;

powers to review existing consents for potentially damaging operations;

powers for the statutory nature conservation agencies to make byelaws to control the activities of third parties;

powers for the Secretary of State to make special nature conservation orders, to prevent damage, which are not time limited;

changes to planning law to give effect to the directive's requirements in terms of the consideration and approval of plans and projects likely to affect sites.

**Mr. Whittingdale:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the requirements and benefits of designation as *(a)* a site of special scientific interest; *(b)* a special protection area; *(c)* a Ramsar site; *(d)* a national nature reserve and *(e)* a special area of conservation. [22138]

**Mr. Atkins:** The various designations indicate a site's national or international importance for nature conservation and the level of protection to be given to its wildlife and natural features under both wildlife and planning legislation. Each of the designations referred to by my hon. Friend plays its part in meeting th Government's commitment to sustainable development, and in particular to conserving the natural heritage for the benefit of this and future generations:

(a) sites of special scientific interest are notified by English Nature under section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 for their special interest by reason of their flora, fauna, or geological or physiographical features. SSSIs are protected from damaging operations and the notification is a material factor in the consideration of any development proposal that might affect the site;

(b) special protection areas are classified by my right hon. Friend under the EC wild birds directive to safeguard the habitats of bird species listed in annexe 1 to the directive and of regularly occurring migratory species;

(c) Ramsar sites are wetlands of international importance, which are designated by my right hon. Friend in fulfilment of the United Kingdom's obligations under the convention on wetlands of international importance, the Ramsar convention, to conserve wetlands and foster their wise use;

(d) national nature reserves are declared by English Nature under section 35 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Their essential characteristic is that their primary use is for nature conservation;

(e) no special areas of conservation have yet been designated. A list of possible SACs is currently the subject of public consultation. SACs are to be sites hosting the natural habitat types and habitats of the species listed in the EC habitats and species directive. Member states are required to establish the necessary conservation measures which correspond to the ecological requirements of the site.

These designations are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, it is the Government's policy that SPAs, Ramsar sites, NNRs and SACs shall first be notified as SSSIs. Further details on these designations are given in planning policy guidance note 9, issued in October 1994, a copy of which is in the Library.

### Housing Associations

**Mr. Burden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion, by local authority in the west midlands, of the Housing Corporation's approved development programme for 1995–96 will be used by housing associations for rehabilitating existing properties *(a)* for rent and *(b)* for shared ownership; how many units of accommodation this will cover; and how this compares with his Department's original ADP funding intentions for 1995–96, as set out in the 1992 "Autumn Statement". [22720]

**Mr. Robert B. Jones** *[holding answer 9 May 1995]:* The table shows the proportion, by local authority in the west midlands, of the Housing Corporation's approved development programme for 1995–96 which will be used by housing associations for rehabilitating existing properties *(a)* for rent and *(b)* for shared ownership; and the related units of accommodation. No regional allocation was made of the 1995–96 ADP as set out in the 1992 "Autumn Statement".

*West Midlands allocations 1995–96*

| Local Authority | Rental Accommodation: Total allocation (£'000) | Related units | Rehab allocation (£'000) | Related units | Per cent. Rehab allocation | Shared Ownership[1]: Total allocation (£'000) | Related units | Rehab allocation (£'000) | Related units | Per cent. rehab allocation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Birmingham | 1,182 | 631 | 489 | 268 | 41 | 1,324 | 96 | 286 | 19 | 22 |
| Bridgnorth | 183 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Bromsgrove | 209 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 54 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Cannock Chase | 320 | 12 | 320 | 12 | 100 | 57 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Coventry | 1,587 | 86 | 644 | 30 | 41 | 181 | 15 | 44 | 5 | 24 |
| Dudley | 1,030 | 45 | 991 | 44 | 96 | 44 | 5 | 44 | 5 | 100 |
| East Staffordshire | 416 | 24 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Hereford | 463 | 25 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Leominster | 189 | 10 | 189 | 10 | 100 | 50 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Lichfield | 450 | 32 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 9 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Malvern Hills | 355 | 16 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 52 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Newcastle-under-Lyme | 579 | 19 | 579 | 19 | 100 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| North Shropshire | 233 | 12 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| North Warwickshire | 401 | 27 | 79 | 4 | 20 | 85 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Nuneaton and Bedworth | 485 | 21 | 155 | 7 | 32 | 36 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Oswestry | 205 | 18 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 22 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Redditch | 191 | 16 | 39 | 2 | 21 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Rugby | 273 | 27 | 120 | 14 | 44 | 23 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Sandwell | 1,771 | 83 | 763 | 38 | 43 | 189 | 14 | 18 | 2 | 9 |
| Shrewsbury and Atcham | 450 | 32 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 189 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Solihull | 721 | 39 | 200 | 10 | 28 | 111 | 11 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| South Herefordshire | 239 | 13 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 76 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| South Shropshire | 220 | 24 | 220 | 24 | 100 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| South Staffordshire | 363 | 16 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Stafford | 402 | 20 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Staffordshire Moorlands | 342 | 18 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 81 | 5 | 81 | 5 | 100 |
| Stoke-on-Trent | 2,044 | 130 | 650 | 44 | 32 | 53 | 6 | 53 | 6 | 100 |
| Stratford-on-Avon | 269 | 12 | 172 | 7 | 64 | 35 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Tamworth | 203 | 11 | 38 | 2 | 19 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The Wrekin | 448 | 38 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 66 | 5 | 66 | 5 | 100 |
| Walsall | 2,128 | 107 | 60 | 4 | 3 | 251 | 20 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Warwick | 565 | 27 | 260 | 12 | 46 | 81 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Wolverhampton | 1,692 | 105 | 610 | 34 | 36 | 367 | 30 | 171 | 15 | 47 |
| Worcester | 432 | 21 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 63 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Wychavon | 349 | 14 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 34 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Wyre Forest | 800 | 90 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

[1] Associations' development for shared ownership sale. Excludes do-it-yourself shared ownership.

### Deyntes Cottage, Northolt

**Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will call in the current planning application to Ealing council concerning Deyntes cottage, Northolt; and if he will make a statement. [23137]

**Sir Paul Beresford:** I am considering the case and will write to my hon. Friend shortly.

### Surcharged Councillors

**Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many councillors in England have been surcharged or prosecuted as a consequence of taking decisions in relation to the Local Government (Planning and Land) Act 1980; [23341]

(2) how many councillors in England have been surcharged or prosecuted as a consequence of taking decisions in relation to the Local Government Act 1988. [23342]

**Mr. Curry:** My Department does not keep records of such actions.

### Local Authority Contracts

**Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list by authority and service area the number of full-time equivalent job losses experienced by local authority direct labour/service organisations in England operating contracts under the terms of the Local Government Act 1988 for the financial years 1990–91, 1991–92, 1992–93 and 1993–94; [23333]

(2) if he will list by authority and service area the number of full-time equivalent job losses experienced by local authority direct labour/service organisations in England operating contracts under the terms of the Local Government (Planning and Land) Act 1980 for the financial years 1990–91, 1991–92, 1992–93 and 1993–94. [23334]

**Mr. Curry:** My Department does not keep this information.

**Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list by service area the local authorities in England that have been challenged by his Department under regulations issued under section 9 of the Local Government Act 1992 in relation to their internal arrangements for establishing client/contractor splits. [23335]

**Mr. Curry:** Although we have received allegations of anti-competitive behaviour by local authorities about the arrangements for establishing a client/contractor split, none has proceeded to statutory action. Records are not available by service area of the allegations which have been received.

**Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many local authority direct labour/service organisations in England, operating contracts under the terms of the Local Government (Planning and Land) Act 1980 have achieved the required rate of return for the financial years 1992–93 and 1993–94;

(2) how many local authority direct labour/service organisations in England, operating contracts under the terms of the Local Government Act 1988, have achieved the required rate of return for the financial years 1992–93 and 1993–94. [23338]

**Mr. Curry:** For the financial year 1992–93, my Department recorded 2,409 accounts for direct service/labour organisations under the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 and Local Government Act 1988. Some 2,060 of these accounts—85.5 per cent.—recorded that the DLO or DSO had met the statutory financial objective.

For 1993–94, 2,381 accounts were received of which 2,057—86.4 per cent.—recorded that the financial objectives had been met.

**Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list by authority and service area the recorded deficits made by local authority direct labour/service organisations in England that have failed to meet the rate of return requirements operating contracts under the terms of the Local Government (Planning and Land) Act 1980 and the Local Government Act 1988, for the financial years 1990–91, 1991–92, 1992–93 and 1993–94 expressed in both absolute and percentage terms. [23336]

**Mr. Curry:** Three hundred and twenty-four—13.6 per cent.—of the 2,381 local authority direct labour/service organisation accounts for 1993–94 received by my Department recorded a failure to meet the rate of return requirements.

For 1992–93, 2,409 accounts were received of which 349—14.5 per cent.—recorded a failure to meet the rate of return requirements.

For 1991–92, 2,260 accounts were received of which 320—14.2 per cent.—recorded a failure to meet the rate of return requirements.

For 1990–91, just over 2,000 accounts were received of which 330—14.8 per cent.—recorded a failure to meet the rate of return requirements.

Detailed lists for the years 1991–92 to 1993–94 have been placed in the Library of the House. A list for 1990–91 could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

**Mr. Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list, by authority, the surplus achieved on trading accounts for the financial years 1992–93 and 1993–94 for *(a)* general highways work, *(b)* construction and maintenance of sewers, *(c)* works of new construction and *(d)* maintenance work, delivered by local authorities' direct labour/service organisations in England under the terms of the Local Government (Planning and Land) Act 1980; [23320]

(2) if he will list, by authority, the surplus achieved on trading accounts for the financial years 1992–93 and 1993–94 for *(a)* refuse collection, *(b)* street cleaning, *(c)* building cleaning, *(d)* school and welfare catering, *(e)* other catering, *(f)* vehicle maintenance, *(g)* ground maintenance and *(h)* sports and leisure maintenance, delivered by local authorities' direct labour/service organisations in England under the terms of the Local Government Act 1988; [23321]

(3) if he will list, by authority and service area, as defined by the Local Government (Planning and Land) Act 1980, surpluses achieved by local authority direct labour/service organisations in England for the financial years 1992–93 and 1993–94;

(4) if he will list, by authority and service area, as defined by the Local Government Act 1988, surpluses achieved by local authority direct labour/service organisations in England for the financial years 1992–93 and 1993–94. [23323]

**Mr. Curry:** Some 2,074—87.1 per cent.—of the 2,381 local authority direct service/labour organisation accounts for 1993–94 received by my Department recorded surpluses. A detailed list has been placed in the Library of the House. Lists for 1992–93 could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

### Sulphur Emissions

**Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is in a position to issue new sulphur emissions allocations under the national plan to large combustion plant in the other industry sector. [24262]

**Mr. Atkins:** The EC large combustion plant directive requires member states to draw up programmes for the progressive reduction of total annual emissions from existing plants of sulphur dioxide and oxides of nitrogen with the aim of complying with the ceilings and percentage reductions laid down in the directive. The UK national plan for meeting these commitments was made in 1990. Existing large combustion plant are, under the plan, grouped into three sectors: electricity supply, refineries, and the remaining plant grouped together as "other industry".

In the other industry sector it was expected that the replacement of existing plant with new plant would over time lead to a reduction in the sector allocations for permitted levels of $SO_2$ emissions. This reduction has taken place more slowly than anticipated. As a result, forward allocations for 1996 exceeded the sector total in the national plan. Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution, which has responsibility for allocating the sector total between sites, therefore consulted last year on a revised method of allocation. Following that consultation, Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution has today issued revised allocations to sites in England and Wales for 1996, 1997 and 1998.

The existing national plan is likely to be superseded in due course by a wider national strategy aimed at delivering the UK's commitment under the second United Nations Economic Commission for Europe sulphur protocol. The targets under the protocol for an 80 per cent. reduction over 1980 levels in $SO_2$ emissions from all sources by 2010 are likely to require some reduction in the existing national plan targets for total emissions in 1999 and subsequent years. We hope to consult later in the year on proposals for the new national strategy.

### Climate Change Programme

**Mr. Congdon:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he will take to enhance the climate change programme following the recent announcement concerning the fossil fuel levy. [24305]

**Mr. Gummer:** My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has announced that he proposes to privatise parts of Nuclear Electric during 1996, and at the same time to end payments from the fossil fuel levy to the company, ahead of the original schedule. Our climate change programme and recently published forecasts

assumed the original schedule for the termination of these payments.

Early termination will mean that electricity prices will fall sooner than anticipated, which may result in some corresponding increase in the output of carbon dioxide in the short term. I am determined to ensure that we sustain momentum for increased energy efficiency, and continue to give the strong lead we have established internationally on climate change, most recently at the first conference of parties to the climate change convention in Berlin. I am therefore pleased to announce that I shall make available to the Energy Saving Trust an additional £25 million a year to promote energy efficiency measures, from 1996 until the gas and electricity markets are fully liberalised.

Following my earlier announcement of support for its running costs, the Energy Saving Trust is currently drawing up new plans. I intend to invite the trust to use the coming year to prepare a number of cost-effective proposals for my consideration. I will make money available for the best ones within the £25 million ceiling.

I shall be looking for innovative pump-priming schemes involving all fuels, which require funding to get started and which are designed to take advantage of and enhance the effectiveness of the developing competitive markets for energy and energy services. I shall be looking for a positive emphasis on demand-side management measures and on the development of energy services companies.

## LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

### Historical Documents

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what advice he gives to Departments concerning the training of persons with responsibility for assessing the historical significance of documents held in those Departments. [23180]

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** Guidance is issued by the Keeper of Public Records. Section 3(2) of the Public Records Act 1958 prescribes that every person responsible for public records shall perform his duties under such guidance, which is detailed in the Public Record Office's "Manual of Records Administration".

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what special training is given to persons who have responsibility for assessing the historical significance of documents held by his Department. [23283]

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** Training in assessing the historical significance of departmental records is carried out under the guidance of the Keeper of Public Records. It is provided in a number of different ways, including courses on the appraisal of records and through conferences and seminars arranged by the Public Record Office.

### Female Poll Tax and Fine Defaulters

**Ms Janet Anderson:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many cases of women being gaoled for poll tax and fine default have had those convictions ruled unlawful in the High Court since 1989. [23151]

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** The question concerns a specific operational matter on which the chief executive of the Court Service is best placed to provide an answer and I have accordingly asked the chief executive to reply direct.

*Letter from M. Huebner to Ms Janet Anderson, dated 10 May 1995*:

The Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, has asked me to reply to your question about the number of convictions which have been ruled unlawful by the High Court involving women gaoled for poll tax and fine default.

I am sorry to have to tell you that this information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

### State Papers

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the official definition of a state paper. [22935]

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** I understand the expression "State Papers" to signify those papers which are created or acquired by Ministers, officials or other Crown servants by virtue of the office they hold under, or their service to, the Crown. Whether or not the Crown can claim ownership of any wider class of papers will depend on the circumstances of the case.

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department in what circumstances state papers are permitted to be held in private hands. [22936]

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** State papers are normally held by the Crown. In very rare circumstances, they may be held in private hands, normally when permission has exceptionally been given to a former Minister or public servant to retain possession of them. Examples of such circumstances are given in part 1 of the report of the Committee of Privy Counsellors on Ministerial Memoirs, Cmnd 6386, also known as the Radcliffe committee.

### Solicitors

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what action he plans to take in respect of solicitors who persuade criminals to take civil cases against the police. [22732]

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** Solicitors are duty bound to act in the best interests of and on the instructions of their clients and, subject to means and eligibility tests, will apply for legal aid to take or defend actions where appropriate on behalf of their clients.

### Legal Aid

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will take urgent action to limit legal aid in fraud cases to a maximum of £10,000. [22742]

**Mr. John M. Taylor:** The Lord Chancellor has recently announced the proposals he intends to take forward following the consultation paper on legal aid for the apparently wealthy. The Lord Chancellor will issue a Green Paper on the future of legal aid very soon. That will address the provision of legal aid in both civil and criminal cases.

### Leasehold

**Mr. David Atkinson:** To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what effect the recent leasehold valuation tribunal decision on the Westminster Grosvenor estate will have on recent legislation providing for leasehold enfranchisement; and if he will make a statement. [23345]

**Mr. Robert B. Jones:** I have been asked to reply.

The Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban Development Act 1993 enables leasehold valuation tribunals to approve estate management schemes, if the tribunal is satisfied that this is in the general interest having regard to the matters specified in the Act. The Grosvenor estate, Mayfair, applied for a scheme, and following a hearing the tribunal approved it. I understand that this decision is being appealed to the Lands Tribunal.

## HEALTH

### Mental Health Care

**Ms Jowell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the amount spent per head of the population on NHS mental health care in London, Manchester, Birmingham, Liverpool and Newcastle in each year since 1991. [21916]

**Mr. Bowis:** Figures are shown in the table. Comparable figures are not available prior to 1991–92.

| | *1991–92* £ | *1992—93* £ | *1993–94* £ |
|---|---|---|---|
| London | 60.05 | 65.00 | 63.46 |
| Newcastle | 88.64 | 70.00 | 71.74 |
| Birmingham | 47.11 | 51.95 | 52.10 |
| Manchester | 61.84 | 72.92 | 51.93 |
| Liverpool | 33.51 | 41.03 | 47.37 |

*Sources:*
1. Annual financial returns of health authorities.
2. Mid-year population estimates.

*Notes:*
1. Figures for 1993–94 are provisional.
2. Figures are for services purchased by district health authorities and do not include expenditure by general practitioner fundholders.
3. Figures do not include expenditure on services for people with learning disabilities.

In addition, of course, local authorities in these cities would also incur expenditure as a result of their responsibilities for the care of mentally ill people.

### Serious Bowel Disease

**Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) on what date Ministers were first informed of the research project recently reported in *The Lancet*, into possible links between immunisation for measles and serious bowel disease; [22624]

(2) on what date Ministers were first informed of the findings of the research project recently reported in *The Lancet*, into possible links between immunisation for measles and serious bowel disease. [22625]

**Mr. Sackville:** The chief medical officer was first informed of the scope of the Royal Free hospital school of medicine work which was reported in *The Lancet* recently in September 1994. At that point, he sought advice from national and international experts. In January 1995, the Department of Health convened a meeting at which the preliminary results of the Royal Free work were discussed. At that meeting, attended by independent experts, work was also presented on other possible factors in the causation of serious bowel disease including other infectious agents.

### Tobacco

**Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will provide tables showing for each 5p between 5p and £1, her estimate of the effect on consumption of an increase in the purchase price of an average *(a)* packet of 20 cigarettes, *(b)* 250 g of hand-rolling tobacco, *(c)* packet of five cigars and *(d)* 250 g of pipe tobacco. [22991]

**Mr. Sackville:** The Department does not hold figures on the effect of price on the consumption of specific tobacco products holding a minor share of the market, such as hand-rolling tobacco, cigars or pipe tobacco. However, studies have shown that a 10 per cent. increase in the price of tobacco products can be expected to lead to a drop of between 3 per cent. and 6 per cent. in consumption. Working on the basis of this relationship the effect of price increases on a packet of cigarettes costing £2.70 would be as follows:

| *Increase in price* | *Percentage decrease in consumption Per cent.* |
|---|---|
| 5p | 0.6—1.1 |
| 10p | 1.2—2.2 |
| 15p | 1.6—3.2 |
| 20p | 2.1—4.2 |
| 25p | 2.6—5.2 |
| 30p | 3.1—6.1 |
| 35p | 3.6—7.1 |
| 40p | 4.1—8.0 |
| 45p | 4.5—8.8 |
| 50p | 5.0—9.7 |
| 55p | 5.4—10.6 |
| 60p | 5.8—11.3 |
| 65p | 6.3—12.1 |
| 70p | 6.7—12.9 |
| 75p | 7.1—13.7 |
| 80p | 7.5—14.4 |
| 85p | 7.9—15.1 |
| 90p | 8.3—15.9 |
| 95p | 8.7—16.6 |
| 100p | 9.0—17.2 |

**Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on her most recent assessment of the relationship between cigarette advertising and the level of smoking-related illness. [22672]

**Mr. Sackville:** In 1992, the Department of Health reviewed all the available evidence on the effect of tobacco advertising on tobacco consumption. The findings were published as a discussion document, "Effect of Tobacco Advertising on Tobacco Consumption", copies of which are available in the Library.

**Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her Department's assessment of the relationship of the price of tobacco products to health. [23002]

**Mr. Sackville:** Studies show that a 10 per cent. increase in the price of tobacco products would be expected to lead to a reduction in consumption of between

3 per cent. and 6 per cent. Since tobacco consumption is harmful to health, increases in price can therefore be expected to have a beneficial effect on health.

**Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she last discussed, and when she next plans to discuss, tobacco pricing with a *(a)* European Union health ministers and *(b)* Group of Seven member country Health Ministers; and if she will make a statement. [22954]

**Mr. Sackville:** The European Community Health Council last discussed smoking at its meeting on 22 December 1994, including the importance of price in reducing tobacco consumption. There is no specific date for the next discussion, although this issue is regularly raised at meetings between Ministers and other European Health Ministers. Indirect taxation issues are of course a matter for Finance Ministers.

There have been no meeting of the Group of Seven member country Health Ministers, nor are any planned.

**Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the percentage of the population by *(a)* age, *(b)* sex and *(c)* socio-economic grouping consuming each different type of tobacco product for each year since 1965; and if she will give her estimate of levels of consumption for the current year among each of these groups. [22992]

**Mr. Sackville:** The available data will be placed in the Library.

The tables give the percentage of adults estimated to smoke cigarettes, cigars and pipes and of under-16s estimated to smoke cigarettes. Data on other types of tobacco products are not available.

**Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many representations she has received in the last year concerning the effect of the price of tobacco products on levels of consumption; how many have been in favour of *(a)* an increase and *(b)* a decrease in price; and if she will list the representations received. [22953]

**Mr. Sackville:** Tobacco taxation policy is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The available records show that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health received 12 letters on this subject in the last year. Six of the correspondents were in favour of price increases, four wished to see no further rise, while the remaining two suggested that price rises would not achieve any reduction in consumption.

### NHS Staff Retirement

**Mr. Redmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total of NHS staff *(a)* retiring on pension and *(b)* taking early retirements on pension for each of the last 10 years; and what was the annual cost of early retirements in each of the last 10 years. [22739]

**Mr. Sackville:** Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the NHS Pensions Agency under its chief executive, Mr. A. F. Cowan. I have asked him to reply to the hon. Member.

*Letter from A. F. Cowan to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 11 May 1995:*

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question as it falls within my area of responsibility.

A breakdown of the figures in the format requested is not available. We are however able to provide the following information:

Age retirements over the last 4 years:

*Age Retirements*

| *Year* | *Number* |
|---|---|
| 1991–92 | 11,734 |
| 1992–93 | 12,774 |
| 1993–94 | 9,635 |
| 1994–95 | 11,364 |

Ill-health retirements over the last 4 years:

*Ill-health Retirements*

| *Year* | *Number* |
|---|---|
| 1991–92 | 7,387 |
| 1992–93 | 8,381 |
| 1993–94 | 8,613 |
| 1994–95 | 8,484 |

Early retirements over the last 4 years:

*Early retirements*

| *Year* | *Number* |
|---|---|
| 1991–92 | 3,108 |
| 1992–93 | 4,033 |
| 1993–94 | 6,318 |
| 1994–95 | 5,564 |

The value of early retirements including ill-health retirements to the scheme over the last 3 years is:

| *Year* | *£ million* |
|---|---|
| 1992–93 | 137.291 |
| 1993–94 | 158.827 |
| 1994–95 | 211.383 |

### GP Fundholding

**Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what guidelines she has issued to general practitioner fundholders regarding the assessment of a patient's needs as medical or social; [22693]

(2) what guidelines she has issued to general practitioner fundholding practices regarding the maintenance of respite care provided by general practitioners. [22695]

**Mr. Malone:** The explanatory booklet "General Practitioners and Caring for People", issued in October 1992, provided guidance for general practitioners on the implications of the community care reforms. In addition, HSG(95)8 sets out NHS responsibilities, including those of fundholding GPs for meeting continuing health care needs. Fundholding GPs do not purchase respite care other than through the total purchasing pilot projects, where fundholding GPs work in partnership with health authorities to purchase the full range of health care for their patients.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many general practitioner fundholders employed community psychiatric nurses in each of the last five years; [22845]

(2) how many general practitioner fundholders employed health visitors in each of the last five years; [22846]

(3) how many health visitors were employed by general practitioner fundholding practices in each of the last five years. [22847]

**Mr. Malone:** None. Fundholding general practitioners do not directly employ nurses providing these services. Fundholding general practitioners may contract for these services with an established national health service provider of community nursing services or with a provider of community mental health services.

### Liver Complaints

**Mr. Critchley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to increase the number of specialist intensive care units for liver complaints. [23077]

**Mr. Sackville:** None. Specialist units for treating liver failure are provided under the supra-regional arrangements. They are funded centrally to meet the level and quality of service required.

### Newham General Hospital

**Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will request the East London and City health authority, or other appropriate body, to conduct an inquiry related to the relevant parts of the Medical Act 1983, into the participation by a theatre assistant in an operation at Newham general hospital conducted earlier this year. [23119]

**Mr. Malone:** This is a matter for Newham Healthcare national health service trust. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mrs. Rosemary Walters, chairman of the trust, for details.

### Children in Care

**Ms Janet Anderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health in how many cases the children of women serving custodial sentences for fine defaulting have been taken into care since 1989. [23152]

**Mr. Bowis:** This information is not available centrally.

### Junior Doctors' Hours

**Mr. Peter Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many junior doctors and dentists, by region, remain outside the current new deal limits for contracted hours in on-call posts; and if she will make a statement. [24261]

**Mr. Malone:** The new deal on junior doctors' hours, a copy of which is in the Library, currently requires that no junior doctor or dentist should be contracted for an average of more than 72 hours a week in a hard-pressed post. At 8 February 1995, the returns from the eight regions in England were as follows:

*Hard-pressed on-call posts contracted for more than 72 hours a week*

| *Region* | *March 1994* | *September 1994* | *February 1995* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Northern and Yorkshire | 1,433 | 878 | 162 |
| Trent | 342 | 175 | 60 |
| Anglia and Oxford | 517 | 306 | 189 |
| North Thames | 1,094 | 773 | 178 |
| South Thames | 879 | 411 | 95 |
| South and West | 452 | 148 | 20 |
| West Midlands | 529 | 293 | 67 |
| North West | 1,291 | 801 | 0 |
| Total | 6,537 | 3,785 | 771 |

Since March 1994 there has been a fall of over 88 per cent., from 6,537 to 771, in the number of hard-pressed on-call posts contracted for more than 72 hours a week. Over 96 per cent. of the present total of 27,669 junior doctors and dentists now comply with the current new deal contracted hours targets.

This is excellent progress, showing that the rate at which we are eliminating these posts more than doubled in the four months to February this year. Hospitals, supported by our task forces, have made enormous strides in confronting the problem of long hours and I am very grateful to them.

While we must remain firmly focused on tackling the hard-core of problem posts remaining, I believe we have now succeeded in establishing a ceiling on contracted hours which will help us to press on with further improvements.

The progress we are making is most encouraging, but there is no room for complacency. We know that more work is still needed to crack the problem and there are still too many juniors who are under pressure to work too long. The Government are absolutely committed to ensuring that juniors get real and lasting benefits from the new deal.

### Epilepsy

**Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what representations she has had regarding National Epilepsy Week; what financial support her Department has given and will be giving to National Epilepsy Week; and if she will make a statement; [22844]

(2) pursuant to her answer to the hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham (Mrs. Gillan) of 17 January, *Official Report*, column *576*, what progress her Department is making with any new initiatives for people with epilepsy; and if she will make a statement. [22920]

**Mr. Bowis:** Since January of this year, the Department of Health has been working with the voluntary sector on an epilepsy initiative which includes National Epilepsy Week. We will officially launch the week on 15 May and we have commissioned a series of posters to publicise the Week and to raise awareness of epilepsy generally. During the week we are sponsoring a large multidisciplinary conference, on epilepsy in London.

These events are only part of the Government's current initiative. We have so far provided £144,000 for voluntary organisation projects over the next three years and £95,000 for two innovative epilepsy service development projects. The Joint Epilepsy Council is producing a booklet for young people with epilepsy and the Royal College of General Practitioners is working on new guidelines, on epilepsy, for general practitioners.

**Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 9 March, *Official Report*, column *320*, how many of the 96 products licensed for the treatment of epilepsy between 1991 and 1995 were *(a)* new chemical entity products, *(b)* variations on existing products and *(c)* products that received a product licence, parallel import; and if she will place the names of the 96 products in the Library. [22921]

**Mr. Sackville:** Records from the Medicines Control Agency show that of the 96 products licensed for the treatment of epilepsy between 1991 and 1995, eight were new chemical entities, 69 were variations, through

abridged licences, on existing products and 19 were products that received a product licence, parallel import.

A list of the information requested will be placed in the Library.

**Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 9 March, *Official Report*, column *320*, how many of the 90 products licensed for the treatment of epilepsy between 1985 and 1990 were *(a)* new chemical entity products, *(b)* variations on existing products and *(c)* products that received a product licence, parallel import; and if she will place the names of the 90 products in the Library. [22922]

**Mr. Sackville:** Records from the Medicines Control Agency show that, of the 90 products licensed for the treatment of epilepsy between 1985 and 1990, one was a new chemical entity product, 30 were variations, through abridged licences, on existing products and 59 were products that received a product licence, parallel import.

A list of the information requested will be placed in the Library.

### Child Protection

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much was spent on child protection training for general practitioners in each of the last five years *(a)* by health authority and *(b)* as a percentage of the overall training budget. [22848]

**Mr. Malone:** This information is not available centrally.

**Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health who represents general practitioner fundholders on area child protection committees. [22849]

**Mr. Bowis:** The exact composition of an area child protection committee is a matter to be agreed locally. Government guidance, contained in "Working Together Under the Children Act 1989: A Guide to Arrangements for Inter-Agency Co-operation for the Protection of Children from Abuse", is that general practitioners should be represented by the general practitioner representative(s) of the local medical committee(s). Copies of the guidance are available in the Library.

### National Blood Authority

**Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she now expects the NBA to submit to her its proposals for reorganisation of the national blood transfusion service; and if she will place in the Library a copy of the NBA proposals. [23423]

**Mr. Sackville:** The National Blood Authority will make its final recommendations shortly. A copy of the authority's published proposals will be placed in the Library.

**Mr. Andrew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what contingency planning on the part of the NBA to implement amalgamation of blood centres and changes to present arrangements for the production and testing of blood products she has authorised. [23424]

**Mr. Sackville:** The National Blood Authority was set up in April 1993 to be responsible for the strategic management of the national blood service with a view to enhancing its quality and cost efficiency. Specific changes are a matter for consideration by the National Blood Authority.

### Privatisation

**Mrs. Beckett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will make a statement on the inclusion of privatisation as one of her priorities and key challenges for 1995–96 to 1997–98; [22763]

(2) what factors led to the addition of privatisation as a priority in the 1995 departmental report; [22765]

(3) what services she has prioritised for privatisation in 1995–96 to 1997–98. [22764]

**Mr. Sackville** *[holding answer 9 may 1995]:* The Department is committed to securing the best value for money available for its internal running costs. Its "Priorities and Key Challenges 1995–96—1997–98"—repeated in the "1995 Departmental Report"—includes privatisation as well as market testing and purchasing among the range of techniques available to secure this. This is in line with the White Paper "Continuity and Change", Cm 2627.

A prior options review recommended the privatisation of the non-core business of the National Health Service Estates agency. Ministers have accepted this recommendation and a scoping study is now under way to consider the extent of the business that might be included. There are no other privatisations planned.

### Waiting Lists

**Mrs. Beckett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the percentage change in the average length of time waiting list patients stay in hospital in 1982–83 and 1992–93. [22777]

**Mr. Malone** *[holding answer 9 May 1995]:* Estimates show that the average length of stay in hospital for patients admitted from waiting lists reduced by 41 per cent. between 1982–83 and 1992–93, from 8.7 days to 5.1 days.

## NATIONAL HERITAGE

### Cinemas

**Mr. MacShane:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what information he has on the structure of ownership of cinemas in the United Kingdom. [23604]

**Mr. Dorrell:** I refer the hon. Member to the recent report of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on the supply of films for exhibition in cinemas in the United Kingdom, which provides detailed information about the pattern of such ownership. Copies are available in the Library of the House.

**Mr. MacShane:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations he has received about the future pattern of ownership of cinemas in the United Kingdom. [23605]

**Mr. Dorrell:** None.

### Equal Opportunities

**Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what progress has been made within his Department on equal opportunities matters. [21486]

**Mr. Sproat:** After initial consultation with staff through formal working parties, my Department published in November 1994 an equal opportunities policy statement and an equal opportunities action plan for 1994–95. The policy statement and action plan are consistent with government policy and have recently been updated to reflect the considerable progress made in this area. The documents underline the Department's commitment to be an equal opportunities employer.

### Tourism

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) what programmes analysis review has been carried out as the value of the expenditure of public money on promoting tourism; [22529]

(2) what contribution is made from public funds to the promotion of tourism in the United Kingdom; for what public purpose or purposes; and if he will publish the available evidence on the return produced. [22522]

**Mr. Dorrell:** This financial year the combined grant in aid allocation to the British Tourist Authority and the national tourist boards for England, Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland is close to £90 million. In addition, local authorities in England spend some £62.7 million annually on direct tourism promotion.

The British Tourist Authority and the English tourist board have evaluation studies attached to all their major programmes. Although it is extremely difficult to establish the link between tourist board activity and tourist spend, research undertaken on behalf of the BTA indicates that its activities may stimulate as much as £10 in incremental revenue per £1 spent.

**Mr. Pendry:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is his assessment of proposals made by the British Tourist Authority's VAT working group's report for a reduction in the level of value added tax levied on the accommodation sector. [22947]

**Mr. Dorrell:** The report does not take account of all the different costs to business in other member states and therefore I believe does not demonstrate that UK tourism operators are placed at an overall competitive disadvantage because of the level of VAT alone. The Government are working with the industry on a range of measures to improve the competitiveness of British tourism.

**Mr. Pendry:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations he has made to other Departments with regard to the report prepared by the British Tourist Authority's VAT working party. [22948]

**Mr. Dorrell:** My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has received a copy of the final report and is aware of the industry's views.

### Churchill Papers

**Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage in what circumstances historians and others wanting to use the Churchill papers, following their purchase for the state, will have to pay a copyright fee; to whom such copyright proceeds would go; what is the estimated amount of such proceeds per annum; and if he will make a statement. [22447]

**Mr. Dorrell:** Anyone wishing to use the Churchill papers for commercial purposes will need to seek permission from the copyright owners. Copyright in the non-state papers is vested in the Churchill family; copyright in the state papers is vested in the Crown. The proceeds go to the copyright owners; it is not possible to estimate the amount per annum of such proceeds as this is entirely dependent upon the use made of the papers.

**Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement on his consultations with the national heritage memorial fund in respect of the decision to purchase the Churchill papers. [22448]

**Mr. Dorrell:** Under the National Lottery etc. Act 1993, the national heritage memorial fund is responsible for distributing 20 per cent. of the net proceeds from the national lottery for expenditure on or connected with the national heritage. Individual funding decisions on applications are made entirely independently of Government. However, once the NHMF had reached its decision to fund the purchase of the non-state papers in the archive, the Government chose to transfer the state papers in the archive to Churchill college in order that it be retained intact for the nation.

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many items in the Churchill papers recently purchased *(a)* are state papers, *(b)* are private papers and *(c)* have been the subject of dispute as to whether they are state or private. [22934]

**Mr. Dorrell:** The Government are of the view that none of the papers recently purchased by the national heritage memorial fund was a state paper.

**Mr. Fisher:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the state papers or classes of state papers which Her Majesty's Government have given to Churchill college and the Churchill archive. [22946]

**Mr. Dorrell:** The classes of state papers transferred to the Churchill college by the Crown were those listed as "official" in the catalogue of the Chartwell papers which is available at Churchill college, Cambridge and in the national register of archives, Chancery lane. They include papers relating to Sir Winston Churchill's appointments as Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, President of the Board of Trade, Home Secretary, First Lord of the Admiralty, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Minister of Munitions, Secretary of State for War and Air, Colonial Secretary, Chancellor of the Exchequer and Prime Minister, and to the Cabinet, War Council, War Cabinet and Committee of Imperial Defence.

The remaining classes in the catalogue also contain a number of state papers; ownership of these was transferred at the same time.

### National Vocational Qualifications

**Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many, and what proportion of, vacancies advertised by his Department, and by each of his Department's agencies, in the last three years have listed the attainment of NVQs as an acceptable entry requirement; and, of those, how many have required (i) level 1 NVQs, (ii) level 2 NVQs, (iii) level 3 NVQs and (iv) other level NVQs. [22981]

**Mr. Dorrell:** The Department of National Heritage does little direct recruitment which necessitates advertising vacancies. However, the Department has conducted two recruitment schemes for administrative assistants in the last three years. In both cases, the entry requirement was stated as two GCSEs or equivalent qualification. The NVQ business administration level 1 was accepted as an equivalent qualification.

The Historic Royal Palaces agency and the Royal Parks agency have not so far specified that candidates must possess NVQs for any job vacancies advertised. However, where a NVQ was held which was clearly linked to levels of skills, competencies or experience required for a particular post, it would be taken into account and accepted in place of other equivalent qualifications.

### National Lottery

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is his policy on the extent to which funds from the national lottery should be evenly distributed over the United Kingdom *(a)* on an annual basis and *(b)* over a longer period. [23261]

**Mr. Dorrell:** The net proceeds from the national lottery will be distributed by independent bodies according to the merits of each individual application. The Government have made it clear that they expect to see a fair distribution of lottery proceeds across the United Kingdom taking into account the relative merits of the projects submitted for approval.

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage to what extent the organisations to which he gives directions under section 26 of the National Lottery etc. Act 1993 have regard to previous successful applications when considering subsequent applications from the same area. [23264]

**Mr. Dorrell:** The 11 bodies responsible for the distribution of the net proceeds of the national lottery will consider all projects on their individual merits.

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will require the organisations to which he gives directions under section 26 of the National Lottery etc. Act to publish the criteria they apply in distributing national lottery funds. [23262]

**Mr. Dorrell:** Under directions issued under section 26(3) of the National Lottery etc. Act 1993, the distributing bodies are obliged to publish and regularly update guidance for potential applicants for grants. Copies of the guidance documents published to date—all of which include the criteria against which they will assess applications—have been placed in the Library of the House.

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will review the rules governing the release of information concerning bids for lottery money in so far at this may happen in election periods. [22805]

**Mr. Dorrell:** There are no special rules to the release of information concerning bids for lottery money during election periods. As is the case throughout the public service, the lottery distributing bodies are expected to take particular care during election periods to ensure that their actions are politically impartial.

### Digital Terrestrial Television

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he expects digital terrestrial television to become available in the United Kingdom. [23179]

**Mr. Dorrell:** Digital terrestrial television could become available in the United Kingdom by 1997.

### Telephones

**Mr. Donohoe:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what costs his Department has incurred during the last 12 months as a result of cloning of mobile telephones being utilised by his Department, with particular reference to the making of unauthorised calls. [23485]

**Mr. Dorrell** *[holding answer 9 May 1995]:* My Department has incurred no charges due to the cloning of mobile telephones.

**Mr. Donohoe:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what steps his Department has taken to prevent the cloning of telephones being utilised by his Department; and if his Department has discussed this matter with any official agencies. [23459]

**Mr. Dorrell** *[holding answer 9 May 1995]:* My Department has converted all mobile telephones from analogue to digital. This is in line with advice received from official sources.

**Mr. Donohoe:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations his Department has made to the Department of Trade and Industry concerning the need for legislation to prevent the cloning of mobile telephones. [23472]

**Mr. Dorrell** *[holding answer 9 May 1995]:* My Department has made no representations to the DTI on this matter.

## SCOTLAND

### National Vocational Qualifications

**Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many, and what proportion of, vacancies advertised by his Department, and by each of his Department's agencies, in the last three years have listed the attainment of NVQs as an acceptable entry requirement; and, of those, how many have required (i) level 1 NVQs, (ii) level 2 NVQs, (iii) level 3 NVQs and (iv) other level NVQs. [22972]

**Mr. Lang:** My Department and agencies do not specifically list Scottish vocational qualifications—the Scottish equivalent to NVQs—in their recruitment advertisements, but they make it clear that candidates with qualifications equivalent to any listed are eligible to apply.

### A78

**Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his document "Local Government Reform, Shaping the Trunk Road Network: The Government's Response", if he will make a statement on the trunking of three-mile non-trunk section of the A78 south of Greenock town centre. [23293]

**Lord James Douglas-Hamilton** *[holding answer 9 May 1995]:* One of the criteria for establishing the new trunk road network was to provide the road user with a coherent and continuous system of routes which serve destinations of importance to industry, commerce, agriculture and tourism. Taking into account responses to the published draft proposals and the commercial role performed by the A78, the Government concluded that the A78 should remain part of the new trunk road network and to ensure continuity of this route decided the section of the A78 south of Greenock town centre, which is presently a local road, should be trunked.

A statutory instrument for negative resolution will be prepared and laid before Parliament to give effect to trunking and detrunking proposals across the existing Scottish road network and will include provision to trunk this section of the A78.

### Primary Schools

**Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the expenditure per *(a)* primary school and *(b)* primary school pupil in real and constant price terms in every year since 1979; and what are the corresponding figures excluding staffing costs. [23394]

**Lord James Douglas Hamilton:** Information on annual budgeted expenditure for each primary school in Scotland, and per pupil for each such school, is contained in reports published annually since 1993 by the audit unit of Her Majesty's inspectors of schools. A copy of the most recent report—"Scottish Schools: Cost 1993–94 and 1994–95"—has been placed in the Library.

## AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

### Conflicts of Interest

**Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on how many occasions during the last five years *(a)* civil servants and *(b)* special advisers in his Department or its agencies have declared conflicts of interest; and how many instructions have been issued about their retention, disposal or management. [21382]

**Mr. Jack** *[holding answer 1 May 1995]:* All staff are required to comply with the civil service management code and the Department's staff manual. Comprehensive records are not collected centrally, but where potential conflicts are identified involving staff, including special advisers, arrangements are made to ensure that no actual conflict arises.

### Meat Inspections

**Mr. Dalyell:** To as the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what considerations underlie the requirements *(a)* for a vet to pass deer as fit for slaughter and *(b)* a meat inspector to pass venison as fit for consumption before sale; what aspects of inspection prior to slaughter which are undertaken by a vet could not appropriately be undertaken by a meat inspector; and if he will seek to amend EC regulations in this area. [21442]

**Mrs. Browning** *[holding answer 9 May 1995]:* The EC legislation and our national implementing regulations require all fresh meat, including farmed venison, to be produced under the supervision of an official veterinary surgeon. The Government support the principle of veterinary responsibility for meat hygiene and inspection and have consistently argued for flexibility in the EC legislation to make maximum use of qualified meat inspectors working under the responsibility of the official veterinary surgeon in all aspects of meat inspection and hygiene control.

Where young deer are slaughtered at an abattoir, ante-mortem inspection may be carried out by a meat inspector answerable to the official veterinary surgeon. We will discuss with the Meat Hygiene Service and with interested organisations whether it would be appropriate to review the arrangements for ante-mortem inspection of deer slaughtered on farm, which is normally carried out by the farmer's own veterinary surgeon.

### Birds of Prey

**Mr. Morley:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his estimate of the number and species of birds of prey poisoned in each year since 1987. [22365]

**Mrs. Browning** *[holding answer 9 May 1995]:* The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food co-ordinates the wildlife incident investigation scheme which monitors the effect of pesticides on wildlife and domestic animals. The following figures have been compiled from reports of deaths of birds of prey where pesticides have been confirmed as the likely cause. The figures relate to incidents reported in Great Britain. In order to reduce the risks to wildlife, the Ministry has mounted a campaign against illegal poisoning in collaboration with a number of interested organisations.

| *Year* | *Total (number of incidents)* | *Species* |
|---|---|---|
| 1987 | 20 | Species include Kestrels, Sparrow Hawks, Barn Owls and Buzzards |
| 1988 | 26 | 12 Buzzards<br>1 Peregrine Falcon<br>1 Hen Harrier<br>2 Sparrow Hawks<br>5 Tawny Owls<br>4 Golden Eagles<br>1 Harris Hawk |
| 1989 | 43 | 22 Buzzards<br>1 Golden Eagle<br>3 Peregrine Falcons<br>12 Red Kites<br>4 Sparrow Hawks<br>1 Kestrel |
| 1990 | 36 | 24 Buzzards<br>3 Golden Eagles<br>2 Red Kites<br>2 Hen Harriers<br>4 Sparrow Hawks<br>1 Kestrel |

| Year | Total (number of incidents) | Species |
|---|---|---|
| 1991 | 28 | 4 Owls<br>16 Buzzards<br>2 Red Kites<br>1 Golden Eagle<br>1 Hen Harrier<br>2 Kestrels<br>2 Peregrine Falcons |
| 1992 | 34 | 19 Buzzards<br>1 Goshawk<br>1 Hen Harrier<br>2 Kestrels<br>2 Sparrow Hawks<br>6 Red Kites<br>1 Golden Eagle<br>2 Peregrine Falcons |
| 1993 | 32 | 22 Buzzards<br>1 Golden Eagle<br>5 Red Kites<br>1 Hen Harrier<br>1 Sparrow Hawk<br>1 Merlin<br>1 Owl |

### Live Animal Exports

**Mr. Olner:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was his Department's official response to the legal opinions obtained by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals on the live export of veal calves; and if he will make a statement. [22892]

**Mrs. Browning:** My right hon. Friend informed the House in answer to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Streeter) on 22 February *Official Report*, columns 276–86, that consideration of the RSPCA's latest legal advice was under way; that process is still on-going.

### Historical Documents

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what special training is given to persons who have responsibility for assessing the historical significance of documents held by his Department. [23274]

**Mr. Jack:** Training in assessing the historical significance of departmental records is carried out under the guidance of the Keeper of Public Records. It is provided in a number of different ways, including courses on the appraisal of records and through conferences and seminars arranged by the Public Record Office. Additionally, reviewers receive desk training from visiting Public Record Office staff who constantly monitor appraisal criteria and decisions.

### Brewing Industry

**Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the meetings he has had in the last three months with representatives of the brewing industry with the topics which were discussed at each meeting. [23271]

**Mr. Jack:** My right hon. Friend has met representatives of the brewing industry on four separate occasions over the last three months. A number of issues were discussed including issues relating to the single market.

### Telephones

**Mr. Donohoe:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what costs his Department has incurred during the last 12 months as a result of cloning of mobile telephones being utilised by his Department, with particular reference to the making of unauthorised calls. [23486]

**Mr. Jack** *[holding answer 9 May 1995]:* The Department has incurred no costs during the last 12 months as a result of cloning of mobile telephones. The service providers—Mercury and Vodac—met the cost in all known instances.

**Mr. Donohoe:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many mobile telephones being utilised by his Department have been cloned during the last 12 months. [23430]

**Mr. Jack:** There were seven known instances of mobile phone cloning during the last 12 months.

### Religious Slaughter

**Sir Ivan Lawrence:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he last met representatives of the Jewish community, what was discussed, and if he will make a statement. [24308]

**Mr. Waldegrave:** I met the President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews and other representatives of the Jewish community on 30 March when Shechita—religious slaughter—was discussed in relation to the Welfare of Animals (Slaughter or Killing) Regulations 1995, SI 1995/731. I assured the president that the 1995 regulations maintain the legal protection for Shechita contained in the previous legislation.

Council directive 93/119/EC, on which the 1995 regulations are based, recognises the need to take account of the requirements of religious requirements such as Shechita. The Government accept that Shechita is a fundamental matter of religious belief to Jewish communities who are an important part of our national life and would oppose any moves to remove the right of the Jewish community to practise Shechita.

## OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

### Indonesia

**Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 6 December 1994, *Official Report*, columns *118–20*, if he will list the projects on which British aid to Indonesia was spent in the financial year 1991–92; and what was the value in each case. [23232]

**Mr. Baldry:** The information is as follows:

*Indonesia: projects financed from technical co-operation funds expenditure 1991–92 (£ thousands)*

| Project | Allocation | Expenditure 1991–92 |
|---|---|---|
| *Renewable Natural Resources* | | |
| Rice Development Project | 1,659 | 341 |
| Cloves Disease Research | 706 | 49 |

*Indonesia: projects financed from technical co-operation funds expenditure 1991–92 (£ thousands)*

| *Project* | *Allocation* | *Expenditure 1991–92* |
|---|---|---|
| Coastal Fisheries—University of Diponegoro | 384 | 135 |
| Animal Health Phase 4 | 1,687 | 433 |
| Coastal Prawn Culture | 1,298 | 337 |
| Regional Physical Planning Map Improvement and Training Project | 655 | 259 |
| Forestry Senior Management Team | 1,793 | 297 |
| Forestry Conservation | 1,984 | 61 |
| Forestry Training | 2,454 | 15 |
| Forestry Research | 2,644 | 25 |
| *Energy—Gas* | | |
| Gas Distribution Phase 1 | 4,193 | 570 |
| Gas Distribution Phase 2 | 5,509 | 886 |
| Support to LEMIGAS (Petroleum Authority) | 4,762 | 1,415 |
| *Education* | | |
| Active Learning and Professional Support at Primary Level | 1,708 | 316 |
| Libraries, Books and Development Project | 747 | 259 |
| English Language Teaching at National Level | 1,325 | 177 |
| English Language Teaching in Government Institutions | 1,789 | 207 |
| English Language Teaching | 421 | 421 |
| Maths Primary Specialist | 30 | 29 |
| Biotechnology | 428 | 102 |
| *Mining and Geological Exploration* | | |
| South Sumatra Geological Survey Project | 2,261 | 413 |
| Ombilin Coal Mine Training School | 377 | 86 |
| *Public Administration and Finance* | | |
| Assistance to Regional and Local Finance and Economy | 905 | 412 |
| Trade Investment Cooperative Programme | 286 | 57 |
| Police Management Training | 713 | 178 |
| Indonesian Civil Service Training Institute (LAN) Assistance to Public Administration | 120 | 29 |
| *Public Works* | | |
| Survey and Mapping Advisers Project | 400 | 36 |
| Local Consultants/Professional Engineers Training Project | 1,735 | 242 |
| Madura Groundwater | 52 | 52 |
| *Energy—Electric Power* | | |
| Bali Power Study | 305 | 122 |
| Electricity Authority (PLN) Training Project Phase 2 | 1,162 | 423 |
| Mini Hydros—Phase 2 | 1,290 | 15 |
| Mini Hydros—Phase 3 | 5,610 | 74 |
| *Roads* | | |
| Highway Engineering Course | 565 | 16 |
| Road Engineering Research | 68 | 26 |

*Projects financed from the aid and trade provision*

| *Project* | *Allocation* | *Expenditure 1991–92* |
|---|---|---|
| Steel Bridging (Phase I) | 6,642 | 353 |
| Navigational Aids | 6,386 | 367 |
| Bandung Television Studio | 9,734 | 556 |
| Scattered Diesels | 5,891 | 322 |
| Cigading Port Extension | 13,266 | 1,129 |
| Radio Studios Rehabilitation | 5,040 | 216 |
| Cigading/Serpong Railway | 24,690 | 769 |
| Citayam/Cibinong Railway | 20,105 | 487 |
| Radio Communication System for the Ministry of Forestry | 34,111 | 1,617 |
| Western Universities Equipment | 13,671 | 831 |
| Flight Simulator | 4,659 | 262 |
| Bali and Medan Airport Security | 10,455 | 259 |
| Jambi Power Station | 5,345 | 310 |
| Steel Bridging (Phase II) | 3,669 | 223 |
| Shortwave Radio Transmitters | 26,911 | 1,223 |

**Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on which date his Department first began funding Indonesian police officers *(a)* in Indonesia and *(b)* in the United Kingdom. [23235]

**Mr. Baldry:** We have been providing UK training awards for Indonesian national police officers since 1979 and meeting some of the costs of training courses in Indonesia since 1983.

**Mrs Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 6 December 1994, *Official Report*, columns *118-120*, if he will give the exact date of formal appraisal documents submitted by the Overseas Development Administration and the Department of Trade and Industry in respect of the aid and trade provision support for each project listed. [23251]

**Mr. Baldry:** I provided responses on two of the projects on the list previously in my answers on 10 January to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes), *Official Report*, column *14*, and on 1 March to the hon. Member for Cynon Valley, *Official Report*, column *574*. Because the other projects on the list were generally approved some years ago, the information requested is not immediately available. I shall write to the hon. Lady when we have obtained it.

## Land Mines

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much Her Majesty's Government contribute to United Nations programmes to clear mines in *(a)* Cambodia and *(b)* other countries; and if he will make a statement. [23100]

**Mr. Baldry** *[holding answer 10 May 1995]:* Since April 1992 we have contributed a total of £4.96 million to UN de-mining programmes. Of this, £2.133 million was for Cambodia, £2.5 million for Afghanistan, £226,000 for Angola and £100,000 for the Yemen. In addition, in March 1995 we paid £500,000 into the UN voluntary fund for mine clearance. We shall continue to consider UN requests as helpfully as possible.

### Afghanistan

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 27 April, *Official Report*, column *638*, when Her Majesty's Government will decide how much funding is to be made available to British non-governmental organisations for emergency aid to Afghan refugees and displaced persons for *(a)* rehabilitation and *(b)* other purposes. [23133]

**Mr. Baldry** *[holding answer 10 May 1995]:* I have nothing to add to my previous answer.

## HOUSE OF COMMONS

### Exhibitions

**Mrs. Gillan:** To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee if he has considered an application for an exhibition relating to women in science, engineering and technology to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

**Mr. Michael J. Martin:** I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Administration Committee, arrangements have been made for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from Monday 3 July to Friday 7 July 1995.

## WALES

### European Structural Funds

**Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his policy with regard to the provision of matching funds to help applications for assistance from the EU in Wales under objective 5b schemes. [23074]

**Mr. Redwood:** The objective 5b single programming document for rural Wales 1994–99 makes available European structural funds grants averaging some £23 million a year to support national public expenditure on projects averaging some £34 million and private sector contributions of around £5 million a year. These figures clearly demonstrates that, without substantial domestic expenditure to support projects, it would not be possible to utilise the structural funds grant resources being made available.

Funding for projects can come from a variety of sources including local authorities, Government agencies, training and enterprise councils and voluntary bodies as well as from my Department. It is for applicants to determine whom they should approach to seek funding for any project. Those approached for matching funding, including my Department, will need to satisfy themselves that there is no legal or other constraint to them providing such funding and consider, inter alia, the quality of the project, whether it represents good value for money and what other funding approaches they have received before deciding whether they wish to invest in the project.

### Historical Documents

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what special training is given to persons who have responsibility for assessing the historical significance of documents held by his Department. [23275]

**Mr. Redwood:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him today by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, *Official Report*, column *565*.

### Voluntary Organisations

**Mr. Sweeney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to review the way in which his Department assists local support services for voluntary organisations. [24170]

**Mr. Richards:** I have today issued a consultation paper seeking comments on the effectiveness of current arrangements for delivering support services to voluntary organisations at local level. The paper also seeks views on the best way of channelling support from the Welsh Office to the organisations providing such services. I shall welcome comments from voluntary organisations throughout Wales, from those who have links with the voluntary sector and from the organisations which the Department currently funds. A copy of the consultation paper has been placed in the Libraries of the House.

## EDUCATION

### Inspection Training

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the cost of sending *(a)* a primary school teacher and *(b)* a secondary school teacher on additional inspector training; what is the cost of the place on the course and the additional cost of any supply teaching which has to be provided; and which body meets this cost; [23649]

(2) how many *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary school teachers have attended additional inspector training this year. [23650]

**Mr. Forth:** These are matters for Her Majesty's chief inspector of schools, who heads the Office for Standards in Education. I have asked Mr. Chris Woodhead to write to the hon. Member.

### Pupils

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will list for each local education authority *(a)* the proportion and *(b)* the number of pupils in grant-maintained (i) primary and (ii) secondary schools. [23651]

**Mr. Robin Squire:** The information requested is set out in the tables.

*Primary*

| *LEA area* | *Number of pupils in GM primary schools* | *Percentage of maintained primary pupils in GM schools* |
|---|---|---|
| Avon | 0 | 0 |
| Barking | 0 | 0 |
| Barnet | 758 | 3 |
| Barnsley | 0 | 0 |
| Bedfordshire | 586 | 1 |
| Berkshire | 2,390 | 4 |
| Bexley | 643 | 4 |
| Birmingham | 1,655 | 2 |
| Bolton | 380 | 2 |

| LEA area | Primary: Number of pupils in GM primary schools | Primary: Percentage of maintained primary pupils in GM schools |
|---|---|---|
| Bradford | 1,538 | 4 |
| Brent | 1,522 | 8 |
| Bromley | 2,235 | 10 |
| Buckinghamshire | 2,817 | 5 |
| Bury | 190 | 1 |
| Calderdale | 1,229 | 7 |
| Cambridgeshire | 2,000 | 3 |
| Camden | 0 | 0 |
| Cheshire | 472 | 1 |
| Cleveland | 0 | 0 |
| Cornwall | 0 | 0 |
| Corporation of London | 0 | 0 |
| Coventry | 0 | 0 |
| Croydon | 1,339 | 5 |
| Cumbria | 3,236 | 8 |
| Derbyshire | 2,175 | 3 |
| Devon | 283 | 0 |
| Doncaster | 0 | 0 |
| Dorset | 632 | 1 |
| Dudley | 385 | 1 |
| Durham | 0 | 0 |
| Ealing | 1,104 | 5 |
| East Sussex | 0 | 0 |
| Enfield | 157 | 1 |
| Essex | 19,866 | 16 |
| Gateshead | 0 | 0 |
| Gloucestershire | 5,412 | 12 |
| Greenwich | 191 | 1 |
| Hackney | 96 | 1 |
| Hammersmith | 0 | 0 |
| Hampshire | 3,993 | 3 |
| Haringey | 0 | 0 |
| Harrow | 0 | 0 |
| Havering | 0 | 0 |
| Hereford and Worcester | 0 | 0 |
| Hertfordshire | 2,157 | 3 |
| Hillingdon | 2,707 | 15 |
| Hounslow | 0 | 0 |
| Humberside | 336 | 0 |
| Isle of Wight | 0 | 0 |
| Isle of Scilly | 0 | 0 |
| Islington | 0 | 0 |
| Kensington and Chelsea | 497 | 9 |
| Kent | 6,559 | 5 |
| Kingston upon Thames | 171 | 2 |
| Kirklees | 0 | 0 |
| Knowsley | 0 | 0 |
| Lambeth | 1,963 | 12 |
| Lancashire | 780 | 1 |
| Leeds | 67 | 0 |
| Leicestershire | 0 | 0 |
| Lewisham | 368 | 2 |
| Lincolnshire | 7,530 | 15 |
| Liverpool | 0 | 0 |
| Manchester | 0 | 0 |
| Merton | 0 | 0 |
| Newcastle upon Tyne | 0 | 0 |
| Newham | 0 | 0 |
| Norfolk | 3,202 | 5 |
| North Tyneside | 0 | 0 |
| North Yorkshire | 17 | 0 |
| Northamptonshire | 3,391 | 7 |
| Northumberland | 0 | 0 |
| Nottinghamshire | 0 | 0 |
| Oldham | 0 | 0 |
| Oxfordshire | 81 | 0 |
| Redbridge | 0 | 0 |
| Richmond upon Thames | 0 | 0 |
| Rochdale | 1,612 | 8 |
| Rotherham | 0 | 0 |
| Salford | 0 | 0 |
| Sandwell | 0 | 0 |
| Sefton | 0 | 0 |
| Sheffield | 1,295 | 3 |
| Shropshire | 721 | 2 |
| Solihull | 499 | 3 |
| Somerset | 469 | 1 |
| South Tyneside | 0 | 0 |
| Southwark | 1,437 | 7 |
| St. Helens | 0 | 0 |
| Staffordshire | 102 | 0 |
| Stockport | 0 | 0 |
| Suffolk | 0 | 0 |
| Sunderland | 0 | 0 |
| Surrey | 4,506 | 6 |
| Sutton | 821 | 7 |
| Tameside | 0 | 0 |
| Tower Hamlets | 0 | 0 |
| Trafford | 0 | 0 |
| Wakefield | 0 | 0 |
| Walsall | 572 | 2 |
| Waltham Forest | 0 | 0 |
| Wandsworth | 531 | 3 |
| Warwickshire | 40 | 0 |
| West Sussex | 375 | 1 |
| Westminster | 0 | 0 |
| Wigan | 0 | 0 |
| Wiltshire | 3,815 | 8 |
| Wirral | 0 | 0 |
| Wolverhampton | 0 | 0 |

*Notes:*

1. Pupil numbers are derived from the 1994 DFE schools census and include schools which are currently grant-maintained.
2. Pupil numbers and percentages include all full and part-time pupils, other than these in nursery classes.

| LEA Area | Secondary: Numbers of pupils in GM secondary schools | Secondary: Percentage of maintained secondary pupils in GM schools |
|---|---|---|
| Avon | 1,710 | 3 |
| Barking | 0 | 0 |
| Barnet | 9,905 | 53 |
| Barnsley | 0 | 0 |
| Bedfordshire | 9,451 | 21 |
| Berkshire | 9,029 | 19 |
| Bexley | 3,655 | 25 |
| Birmingham | 15,177 | 23 |
| Bolton | 2,803 | 16 |
| Bradford | 5,286 | 11 |
| Brent | 10,975 | 86 |
| Bromley | 13,923 | 81 |
| Buckinghamshire | 10,174 | 27 |
| Bury | 0 | 0 |
| Calderdale | 7,367 | 55 |
| Cambridgeshire | 15,274 | 37 |
| Camden | 2,381 | 22 |
| Cheshire | 2,492 | 4 |
| Cleveland | 0 | 0 |
| Cornwall | 0 | 0 |
| Corporation of | | |

| LEA Area | Secondary: Numbers of pupils in GM secondary schools | Secondary: Percentage of maintained secondary pupils in GM schools |
|---|---|---|
| London | 0 | 0 |
| Coventry | 0 | 0 |
| Croydon | 7,718 | 52 |
| Cumbria | 10,873 | 35 |
| Derbyshire | 18,048 | 31 |
| Devon | 4,700 | 8 |
| Doncaster | 1,128 | 5 |
| Dorset | 9,947 | 24 |
| Dudley | 4,669 | 26 |
| Durham | 0 | 0 |
| Ealing | 6,111 | 45 |
| East Sussex | 0 | 0 |
| Enfield | 5,634 | 32 |
| Essex | 67,497 | 70 |
| Gateshead | 0 | 0 |
| Gloucestershire | 23,474 | 70 |
| Greenwich | 0 | 0 |
| Hackney | 0 | 0 |
| Hammersmith | 1,237 | 21 |
| Hampshire | 17,020 | 21 |
| Haringey | 0 | 0 |
| Harrow | 528 | 6 |
| Havering | 3,877 | 26 |
| Hereford and Worcester | 3,643 | 8 |
| Hertfordshire | 23,567 | 34 |
| Hillingdon | 11,988 | 85 |
| Hounslow | 2,123 | 15 |
| Humberside | 0 | 0 |
| Isle of Wight | 0 | 0 |
| Isles of Scilly | 0 | 0 |
| Islington | 0 | 0 |
| Kensington and Chelsea | 621 | 20 |
| Kent | 53,506 | 52 |
| Kingston upon Thames | 2,901 | 37 |
| Kirklees | 1,267 | 5 |
| Knowsley | 731 | 8 |
| Lambeth | 3,308 | 52 |
| Lancashire | 6,843 | 8 |
| Leeds | 1,117 | 3 |
| Leicestershire | 3,270 | 5 |
| Lewisham | 0 | 0 |
| Lincolnshire | 17,598 | 47 |
| Liverpool | 3,164 | 10 |
| Manchester | 0 | 0 |
| Merton | 750 | 10 |
| Newcastle upon Tyne | 0 | 0 |
| Newham | 582 | 4 |
| Norfolk | 9,431 | 23 |
| North Tyneside | 220 | 2 |
| North Yorkshire | 0 | 0 |
| Northamptonshire | 9,386 | 21 |
| Northumberland | 650 | 2 |
| Nottinghamshire | 1,837 | 3 |
| Oldham | 0 | 0 |
| Oxfordshire | 0 | 0 |
| Redbridge | 1,125 | 7 |
| Richmond upon Thames | 0 | 0 |
| Rochdale | 2,058 | 16 |
| Rotherham | 0 | 0 |
| Salford | 430 | 4 |
| Sandwell | 1,679 | 9 |
| Sefton | 0 | 0 |
| Sheffield | 1,936 | 7 |
| Shropshire | 4,539 | 18 |
| Solihull | 0 | 0 |
| Somerset | 574 | 2 |
| South Tyneside | 0 | 0 |
| Southwark | 2,786 | 30 |
| St. Helens | 0 | 0 |
| Staffordshire | 4,442 | 6 |
| Stockport | 0 | 0 |
| Suffolk | 0 | 0 |
| Sunderland | 0 | 0 |
| Surrey | 15,082 | 33 |
| Sutton | 6,699 | 59 |
| Tameside | 2,371 | 18 |
| Tower Hamlets | 891 | 7 |
| Trafford | 3,083 | 26 |
| Wakefield | 0 | 0 |
| Walsall | 7,077 | 36 |
| Waltham Forest | 2,099 | 18 |
| Wandsworth | 6,606 | 74 |
| Warwickshire | 4,783 | 19 |
| West Sussex | 0 | 0 |
| Westminster | 0 | 0 |
| Wigan | 0 | 0 |
| Wiltshire | 14,338 | 42 |
| Wirral | 2,107 | 10 |
| Wolverhampton | 2,404 | 15 |

*Note:*

1. Pupil numbers are derived for the 1994 DFE schools census and include all secondary schools which are currently grant-maintained.

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the number and percentage of pupils in *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools in (i) January 1980, (ii) January 1991, (iii) January 1992, (iv) January 1993, (v) January 1994 and (vi) January 1995 being taught in classes of 30-plus in maintained schools (1) in each local education authority and (2) in total. [23653]

**Mr. Robin Squire:** Information on pupils in classes of size 31 and over in maintained primary and secondary schools for January 1980, 1991, 1992, 1993 and 1994 has been placed in the Library. Information for January 1995 will not be available until the autumn.

## Grant-maintained Schools

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will list those schools which have been required to modify the admissions policy submitted as part of their proposals for grant-maintained status before having their application approved. [23652]

**Mr. Robin Squire:** This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will list by local education authority the schools holding ballots on grant-maintained status since 1 January 1994, giving in each case *(a)* whether the outcome favoured or opposed grant-maintained status, *(b)* whether the governing body applied for a grant under section 36 of the Education Act 1993, *(c)* the maximum grant available and *(d)* the amount of grant (i) claimed and (ii) paid. [23654]

**Mr. Robin Squire:** The information requested has been placed in the Library.

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools held ballots on grant-maintained status; how many of each voted in favour of and against becoming grant-maintained; and if she will list the amount of eligible parents in each sector who (i) voted in favour, (ii) voted against and (iii) did not take part in the ballots for the years (1) 1 April 1993 to 31 March 1994 and (2) 1 April 1994 to 31 March 1995.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** The information requested is set out in the table.

*GM ballots*

*Primary schools*

| *Total number of ballots* | *Eligible voters* | *Actual voters* | *Yes votes* | *No votes* | *Number abstained* | *Number of yes ballots* | *Number of no ballots* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *1 April 1993–31 March 1994* 274 | 96,822 | 66,946 | 41,655 | 25,291 | 29,876 | 201 | 73 |
| *1 April 1994–31 March 1995* 94 | 30,956 | 21,155 | 10,231 | 10,924 | 9,801 | 55 | 39 |

*Secondary Schools*

| *Total number of ballots* | *Eligible voters* | *Actual voters* | *Yes votes* | *No votes* | *Number abstained* | *Number of yes ballots* | *Number of no ballots* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *1 April 1993 to 31 March 1994* 171 | 218,518 | 135,779 | 76,612 | 59,167 | 82,739 | 107 | 64 |
| *1 April 1994 to 31 March 1995* 43 | 54,830 | 33,965 | 14,867 | 19,098 | 20,865 | 13 | 30 |

**Mr. Simpson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the cost of funding *(a)* the GM information team and *(b)* the GM information line in (i) 1993–94 and (ii) 1994–95; and what are the budgets for 1995–96; [22790]

(2) how many staff are employed in staffing *(a)* the grant-maintained information team and *(b)* the grant-maintained information line. [22781]

**Mr. Robin Squire:** Currently there are 10 staff employed in the Department's grant-maintained schools information team, dealing with GM publications and organising Going GM conferences. The grant-maintained information line is staffed by members of the team.

The team's costs—including pay, superannuation, employers' national insurance contributions, accommodation, travel and administrative costs—were approximately £330,000 in 1993–94 and £410,000 in 1994–95; and it is estimated they will be some £420,000 in 1995–96. However, these figures are not wholly comparable because of changes in accounting arrangements between 1993–94 and 1994–95. Expenditure on the GM information line cannot be disaggregated from the Department's general telephone costs.

**Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the cost to her Department of materials and staff involved in the campaign to persuade schools to opt for grant-maintained status. [22897]

**Mr. Robin Squire:** The Department's information activities concerning grant-maintained schools are designed to provide factual, unbiased information, not to persuade schools to "opt-out". The total expenditure on GM publications, including videos, since 1988 is some £1,200,000. This represents spending of about 16p per pupil in England.

The grant-maintained schools information team was established during 1991-92. The team's costs—including pay, superannuation, employers' national insurance contributions, accommodation, travel and administrative costs—are estimated at approximately £330,000 in 1993–94 and £410,000 in 1994–95. These figures are not wholly comparable because of changes in internal accounting arrangements between the two years.

**Ms Estelle Morris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will list by local education authority the grant-maintained secondary schools, indicating for each *(a)* the percentage of pupils entitled to receive free schools meals and *(b)* the percentage for the secondary sector in each local authority.

**Mr. Robin Squire:** A table showing the information requested has been placed in the Library.

**Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the cost to her Department of the free video tapes outlining the advantages of opting for grant-maintained status which are provided to parents with children in schools balloting on opt-out proposals. [22898]

**Mr. Robin Squire:** The video "Our Children, Our Choice" provides factual information to those interested in grant-maintained status. It cost some £48,000 to produce and some £30,000 for the 20,000 copies made to date, giving a total cost of £78,000—£3.90 per tape.

## Technology Colleges

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will list by local education authority the schools which have become technology colleges, together with details of the sponsorship agreed in each case. [23656]

**Mr. Robin Squire:** The information requested is set out in the table, with local education authorities listed alphabetically. Each technology college is supported by

sponsorship totalling some £100,000. For most schools, this comprises support from several organisations or individuals. The table then indicates the largest sponsor by value pledged, or largest sponsors where two or more have each pledged the same value, as indicated in the school's application.

| *Local education authority* | *Technology college* | *Main sponsor* |
|---|---|---|
| Barking and Dagenham | All Saints Catholic School | Research Machines |
| Barnet | Mill Hill County High School | Garfield Weston Foundation |
| Berkshire | Denefield School | DHL Worldwide Express |
| | Herschel Grammar School | Slough Estates plc |
| | Prospect School | Granada |
| | Reading School | Sponsors requested anonymity |
| Bexley | Bexley-Erith Technical High School | BETHS Parents Association |
| Birmingham | Small Heath GM School | Garfield Weston Foundation |
| Bolton | St. James's C of E School | GTi Educational Systems |
| Bradford | Hanson School | ICL |
| Brent | John Kelly Boys' Community School | The Bestway Group |
| | John Kelly Girls' Community School | The Bestway Group |
| Bromley | Kemnal Technology College | Philip and Pauline Harris Charitable Trust |
| | Ravens Wood School for Boys | ICL |
| Buckinghamshire | The Chalfonts Community College | GTi Educational Systems |
| Calderdale | Rastrick High School | Stanley Kalms Foundation |
| Cambridgeshire | Deacon's School | Perkins Group |
| | Sawtry Community College | Crossfield Electronics |
| | Soham Village College | ICL and G's Marketing Ltd. |
| Cheshire | Fallibroome High School | Database Ltd. |
| Cumbria | North Cumbria Technology College | Carnaud Metal Box and Cavaghan and Gray |
| Derbyshire | Belper School | Thorntons plc |
| | The Merrill Community School | Denford |
| Dorset | Budmouth School | Budmouth Limited |
| Durham | St. John's RC Comprehensive School | Black and Decker Ltd. |
| Enfield | The Latymer School | ICL |
| Essex | Chalvedon School | Garfield Weston Foundation |
| | The Philip Morant School | Garfield Weston Foundation |
| | Saffron Walden County High School | Garfield Weston Foundation |
| Gateshead | St. Thomas More School | Komatsu UK |
| Gloucestershire | Central Technology College | Garfield Weston Foundation |
| | Cirencester Deer Park School | ICL |
| Hampshire | Applemore Technology School | Garfield Weston Foundation |
| Kent | Chatham Grammar School for Girls | Garfield Weston Foundation |
| | The Cornwallis School | ICL |
| | Hugh Christie School | ICL |
| | Senacre Technology School | Research Machines |
| Lancashire | All Hallows RC High School | British Aerospace |
| | Archbishop Temple School | British Aerospace |
| | Bacup and Rawtenstall Grammar School | Stanley Kalms Foundation |
| | Baines School | Baines Foundation |
| | Lancaster Girls' Grammar School | British Aerospace |
| | Royal Grammar School Lancaster | Trustees of the Endowment, Royal Grammar School |
| | St. Aidan's VA School | British Aerospace and Canatxx Energy Ventures |
| Leicestershire | Uppingham Community College | L. J. Technical Systems |
| Lincolnshire | The King's School | Database Ltd. |
| | Lincoln School of Science and Technology | Lincolnshire Business Education Trust |
| | St. George's GM Technology School | Mr. R. Brealey |
| Manchester | Trinity CE High School | Communications Business Solutions |
| Newham | St. Angela's Ursuline Convent School | Acatos and Hutcheson plc |
| | St. Bonaventure's VA School | Franciscan Community |
| Norfolk | Lynn Grove High School | ICL |
| Northamptonshire | Bishop Stopford School | Sponsors requested anonymity |
| | Lodge Park School | Garfield Weston Foundation |
| | Northampton School for Boys | Northampton Old Grammar School Foundation |
| Nottinghamshire | George Spencer School | Northampton Old Grammar School Foundation |
| Suffolk | St. Alban's VA School | Sponsors requested anonymity |
| Surrey | All Hallows RC High School | All Hallows Farnham Charitable Trust |
| | Collingwood College | Garfield Weston Foundation |
| | The Glyn School | ADT Group |
| Trafford | New Wellington School | Garfield Weston Foundation, Hopewiser Ltd. and Playlight Hire Ltd. |
| | Sale Moor School | The Alliance Family Foundation |
| Wigan | Deanery CE High School | Latham Jenkins Ltd. |
| Wiltshire | Wyvern College | GTi Educational Systems |
| Wolverhampton | Aldersley High School | Garfield Weston Foundation |
| | Moseley Park GM School | Research Machines |
| | St. Peter's Collegiate School | Garfield Weston Foundation |

### Teacher Training

**Mr. Blunkett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will estimate the number of hours which staff in her Department spend on issues relating to teacher training in *(a)* whole-time equivalents and *(b)* cost terms. [23637]

**Mr. Robin Squire:** The number of full-time equivalents working on issues relating to teacher training including teacher supply in the Department is 14.8. Each member of staff works a contractual 41-hour week. The cost of employing these staff during the financial year 1995–96 is estimated at £656,279.

### Indonesian Students

**Mrs. Clwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many Indonesian nationals studied in the United Kingdom in each year since 1980. [23234]

**Mr. Boswell:** The available information is shown in the following table.

*Numbers of full-time students from Indonesia studying in further and higher education in the United Kingdom*

| *Academic year* | *Numbers* |
|---|---|
| 1979–80 | 600 |
| 1980–81 | [1]— |
| 1981–82 | 300 |
| 1982–83 | 200 |
| 1983–84 | 300 |
| 1984–85 | 300 |
| 1985–86 | 400 |
| 1986–87 | 600 |
| 1987–88 | 600 |
| 1988–89 | 600 |
| 1989–90 | 600 |
| 1990–91 | 500 |
| 1991–92 | 500 |
| 1992–93 | 500 |
| 1993–94[2] | 700 |

[1] Data are not available for 1980–81.
[2] Provisional estimate.
Rounded to nearest hundred.
*Sources:*
Universities Statistical Record.
Further Education Statistical Record.
Welsh Office.
Scottish Office Education Department.
Department of Education for Northern Ireland.

### Administrative Staff

**Mr. Robert Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) if he will make a statement about the success of *(a)* North Yorkshire county council education department and *(b)* other county councils in England over the last five years in reducing the levels of managerial and administrative staff as a result of improved technology and the advent of local management of schools; [23174]

(2) what was the estimated percentage reduction in administrative staff in the education departments of county councils in England resulting from the introduction of local management of schools; and what was the actual percentage achieved; [23176]

(3) what assessment he has made of the effect of high-technology computer systems in the last five years on the establishment of managerial and administrative staff within the education departments of county councils; [23175]

(4) what reductions have been made in the last five years in the managerial and administrative staff of the education departments of county councils as a result of local management of schools; [23177]

(5) what changes of staff numbers in each of the education departments of county councils in England have occurred since the introduction of local management of schools. [22788]

**Mr. Robin Squire:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) on 28 March 1995, *Official Report*, column *570*.

### Historical Documents

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what special training is given to persons who have responsibility for assessing the historical significance of documents held by her Department. [23289]

**Mr. Robin Squire:** Training in assessing the historical significance of departmental records is carried out under the guidance of the Keeper of Public Records. It is provided in a number of different ways, including courses on the appraisal of records and through conferences and seminars arranged by the Public Record Office.

### National Vocational Qualifications

**Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many, and what proportion of, vacancies advertised by her Department, and by each of her Department's agencies, in the last three years have listed the attainment of NVQs as an acceptable entry requirement; and, of those, how many have required (i) level 1 NVQs, (ii) level 2 NVQs, (iii) level 3 NVQs and (iv) other level NVQs. [22984]

**Mr. Forth:** The Department and its agency have held 19 recruitment competitions in the last three years of which three have listed the attainment of NVQs as an acceptable entry qualification. Of those, all have required NVQ level 1.

### Further Education Funding Council

**Mr. Jim Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education when she was consulted by the Further Education Funding Council on its decision to have the right not to disclose its deliberations; and what plans she has to review the council's provisions on the disclosure of information. [22680]

**Mr. Boswell:** Since its establishment, the Further Education Funding Council has published a bulletin after each council meeting, each committee with delegated authority and each regional committee meeting. The council has proposed to make the minutes and agendas of those meetings available in future. My right hon. Friend has no plans to review these procedures.

**Mr. Jim Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what discussions she has had with the Further Education Funding Council on the setting up of an independent panel to oversee the council; and if she will make a statement. [22684]

**Mr. Boswell:** My right hon. Friend is aware that the Further Education Funding Council is consulting on the possibility of establishing an independent panel to

consider allegations of maladministration. This is a matter for the council.

**Mr. Jim Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will make a statement on the decision of the Further Education Funding Council not to disclose general advice given to her Department with particular reference to its implications for open govnerment. [22678]

**Mr. Boswell:** The Further Education Funding Council's policy is to make publicly available the substance of advice to my right hon. Friend except where my right hon. Friend has asked that advice should remain confidential.

**Mr. Jim Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will make a statement on the policy of the Further Education Funding Council not to publish individual items of expenditure below £20,000 in its annual report; and which other educational bodies observe this limit. [22686]

**Mr. Boswell:** Neither the FEFC, nor any of the non-departmental public bodies which the Department sponsors, is required by statute to publish details of individual items of expenditure. The FEFC's decision to publish details of contracts with values of over £20,000 demonstrates the council's openness and willingness to make information available to the public.

Each of the other educational non-departmental public bodies decides its own policy in this area. Practice varies, but none has adopted the FEFC's approach.

**Mr. Jim Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what criteria apply in terms of registrable financial interests in respect of the work of the Further Education Funding Council. [22587]

**Mr. Boswell:** The Further Education Funding Council is consulting on a code of individual conduct of council members, including a register of financial interests. The council intends to make the register publicly available. This is a matter for the council.

**Mr. Jim Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans she has to introduce legislation for the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration to act as the ombudsman for the Further Education Funding Council. [22685]

**Mr. Boswell:** None.

## Publications

**Mr. Pope:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what are the production and distribution costs of her Department's recent leaflet "National School Tests in 1995—a Parent's Guide"; and what is the circulation of the leaflet other than for schools. [22704]

**Mr. Forth:** The cost of producing 9 million copies of the leaflet "National School Tests in 1995—a Parent's Guide" is £140,000. In addition to schools, distribution routes included post offices and inserts in television listings magazines. Copies were also sent to a database of parents who have asked to receive our material, and will shortly be distributed through a number of retail outlets. In all, over 6 million copies will be in circulation, in addition to the 2.3 million copies requested by schools. The total distribution cost is estimated at some £273,000.

**Mr. Simpson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what has been the total cost of *(a)* establishing and *(b)* administering the GM publications centre. [22791]

**Mr. Robin Squire:** The GM publications centre was established in January 1994. The costs to date are as follows:

| | *Establishment* £ | *Administration* £ |
|---|---|---|
| 1993–94 | 6,000 | 28,000 |
| 1994–95 | — | 124,000 |

The administration costs include handling the freephone requests and publications dispatch costs but do not include call charges.

**Mr. Simpson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what has been the cost for 1994–95 for the publication and distribution of *(a)* "How to Become a Grant Maintained School", 1995 edition, *(b)* "Going Grant Maintained: A Brief Guide", *(c)* "Questions Parents Ask", *(d)* "Questions Staff Ask", *(e)* "Questions Governors Ask", *(f)* "Funding Worksheet 1995–96", *(g)* "Nursery Factsheet", *(h)* "Experiences of Primary Schools", *(i)* "Experiences of Secondary Schools", *(j)* "Experiences of Former Voluntary Schools", *(k)* "Our Children, Our Choice" and *(l)* "Going Grant Maintained with other schools: Grant Maintained clusters; and how many responses has she had to each of these publications (i) in total and (ii) from Nottinghamshire schools. [22782]

**Mr. Robin Squire:** The information requested is as follows:

| | *Approximate publication cost 1994–95* £ | *Responses September 1994–March 1995* |
|---|---|---|
| (a) "How to Become a GM School, 1995 edition | 24,000 | — |
| (b) "Going Grant-Maintained: A Brief Guide" | 6,000 | — |
| (c) "Questions Parents Ask" | 0 | 568 |
| (d) "Questions Staff Ask" | 7,600 | 483 |
| (e) "Questions Governors Ask" | 16,200 | 477 |
| (f) "Funding Worksheet 1995–96" | 11,500 | — |
| (g) "Nursery Factsheet" | 0 | 234 |
| (h) "Experiences of Primary Schools" | 55,000 | 496 |
| (i) "Experiences of Secondary Schools" | 55,000 | 357 |
| (j) "Experiences of Former Voluntary Schools" | 55,000 | 248 |
| (k) "Our Children, Our Choice" | 46,000 | 328 |
| (l) "Going Grant-Maintained with Other Schools: GM Clusters" | 12,500 | 285 |

*Notes:* 1. The above costs do not necessarily represent the full production and printing costs for these publications, but only those which were incurred during the 1994–95 financial year.

2. The total distribution cost for publications by the DFE GM publications centre in 1994–95 was some £124,000.

3. The Department does not keep records of how many people it is contacted by as a result of seeing these publications. The table shows how many orders for one or more copies of each publication were placed with the GM publications centre between September 1994 and March 1995 inclusive. Data on such inquiries were not collated before that time and are therefore not readily available.

4. It is not possible to specify how many orders were destined for Nottinghamshire schools.

5. Although costs were incurred in 1994–95 on the production of items *(a)*, *(b)* and *(f)*, these were not available for distribution to schools until the current financial year.

**Mr. Simpson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the total cost of the publication and distribution of the letters and information concerning the annual consideration of grant-maintained status; and what was the specific cost of the packaging in which the information was sent. [22789]

**Mr. Robin Squire:** Final figures are not yet available, but the estimated total cost of producing and distributing these letters concerning the annual consideration of grant-maintained status, including the enclosed publications, is some £50,000. The cost of packaging was £3,000—some 12p per item. The letter and enclosures were sent to all chairmen of governors and chief education officers in England. Copies of the letter without the publications were sent to head teachers.

### Further and Higher Education, Cumbria

**Dr. John Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what percentage of west Cumbrian secondary school pupils gain *(a)* qualifications in further education and *(b)* qualifications in higher education; and what are the national averages. [22736]

**Mr. Robin Squire:** This information is not available.

### Funding Appeals

**Mr. Jim Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans she has to replace the present complaints procedure for an appeals process for funding. [22681]

**Mr. Boswell:** It is for the Further Education Funding Council to make arrangements for handling complaints about its decisions.

### Research

**Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the share of her departmental budget set aside for research purposes. [22688]

**Mr. Boswell:** For 1994–95 over 6 per cent. of the Department's total expenditure was allocated for research and development. This included the Higher Education Funding Council's allocation to higher education institutions for research.

### Public Bodies

**Mr. Jim Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will list the supervisory educational bodies funded by her Department which do not disclose their deliberations. [22682]

**Mr. Boswell:** None of the Department's executive non-departmental public bodies currently publishes minutes of meetings.

### Further Education Colleges

**Mr. Jim Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will list the available information by which hon. Members are able to examine the financial viability of colleges in their constituencies. [22679]

**Mr. Boswell:** Under the financial memorandum between colleges and the Further Education Funding Council, colleges are required to keep proper accounts and accounting records, and to prepare a statement of accounts in respect of each financial year. Colleges are required to make reasonable arrangements to make copies of the accounts publicly available.

**Mr. Jim Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education to what extent colleges are penalised in their funding via the Further Education Funding Council if the institution fails to meet her growth targets. [22683]

**Mr. Boswell:** Details of the allocation of funding to colleges are matters for the Further Education Funding Council. I am therefore asking the council's chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

### Teachers' Pay

**Ms Janet Anderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many individual letters objecting to the Government's decision not to fund fully the pay rise for teachers from *(a)* hon. Members and *(b)* others her Department has received. [22603]

**Mr. Robin Squire:** The Department has received around 1,500 letters from hon. Members and 15,000 from others on funding issues. Most of these refer either directly or indirectly to the funding of the teachers' pay award.

### Class Sizes

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment the Government have made of the effect of class size in state secondary schools on the education of children in those classes; what representations she has received on the subject from private schools; and what are the current average class sizes in the fifth form for *(a)* grant-maintained schools, *(b)* public schools, and *(c)* other independent schools and *(d)* other state schools. [22437]

**Mr. Robin Squire:** The accumulated research evidence has not demonstrated any simple or conclusive link between marginal changes in class size and pupil performance. What matters most is the quality of the teaching. I am unaware of any representation to my right hon. Friend from independent schools on the issue of class size.

The schools census provides limited information on class size by age. In January 1994 the average size of one-teacher classes for pupils mainly aged 14 and 15 was 21.2 for both maintained and grant-maintained secondary schools. Information on class size in independent schools is not collected by the Department.

## EMPLOYMENT

### Labour Statistics

**Sir Ralph Howell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many males aged between 50 and 65 years are not in full-time employment, as defined by working over 16 hours per week. [22395]

**Miss Widdecombe:** The latest estimates from the labour force survey for autumn 1994 show that 1.8 million males agreed between 50 and 65 were not in full-time employment. Of these, 0.1 million worked 16 hours or less per week, 0.3 million were ILO unemployed and 1.4 million were economically inactive, a category which includes long-term sick and disabled and retirees.

Over three quarters of the economically inactive males—about 1.1 million people—included in this figure stated, in reply to the LFS, that they did not want a job.

### Earnings

**Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the average weekly wage in each year since 1965. [22987]

**Mr. Oppenheim:** Information on the average weekly earnings of all full-time employees on adult rates of pay has been available only since 1983. The most convenient source is table 17 of recent reports of the new earnings survey. The 1994 report contains the information for 1984 to 1994 and the 1993 report that for 1983 to 1993. Table 16 contains information for males and females separately.

Between 1971 and 1983, the available information is for full-time men aged 21 and over and full-time women aged 18 and over. The information for 1974 to 1983 is in table 30 of the 1984 new earnings survey report and that for 1971 to 1973 is in table 15 of the 1980 report.

The available information for the years between 1955 and 1968 is in tables 54 and 55 of "British Labour Statistics Historical Abstract 1986–1968".

Copies of the publications are available in the Library.

**Mr. Barron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what has been the average weekly wage for *(a)* part-time male employees and *(b)* part-time female employees in each socio-economic group in each year since 1865; [22989]

(2) what has been the average weekly wage for *(a)* full-time male employees and *(b)* full-time female employees in each socio-economic group in each year since 1965. [23001]

**Mr. Oppenheim:** No information on average earnings in each socio-economic group is available before an earnings question was introduced into the labour force survey at the end of 1992. For the years since 1971, information on average weekly earnings in each major occupation group can be found in the reports of the new earnings survey, copies of which are available in the Library.

### Employment Medical Advisory Service

**Mr. Galbraith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received *(a)* in favour of and *(b)* against the proposals for the employment medical advisory service; and if he will make a statement. [22803]

**Mr. Oppenheim:** None.

**Mr. Galbraith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to change the employment medical advisory service; and if he will make a statement. [22800]

**Mr. Oppenheim:** In 1994 the Health and Safety Executive began a prior options study to consider whether any of the functions currently carried out by the employment medical advisory service could be undertaken by other means. the report of the study has not yet been completed.

**Mr. Galbraith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many doctors were employed by the employment medical advisory service in each of the last five years for which figures are available. [22801]

**Mr. Oppenheim:** The number of doctors employed in the employment medical advisory service of the Health and Safety Executive at 1 April in each of the last five years was as follows:

1991:47
1992:52
1993:55
1994:47
1995:35

The 1995 figures are not completely comparable with those of earlier years due to the effect of changes in the management structure of the service. Numbers are planned to rise to 39.5 by 1 April 1996.

### Historical Documents

**Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what special training is given to persons who have responsibility for assessing the historical significance of documents held by his Department. [23288]

**Miss Widdecombe:** Training in assessing the historical significance of departmental records is carried out under the guidance of the keeper of public records. It is provided in a number of different ways, including courses on the appraisal of records and through conferences and seminars arranged by the Public Record Office.

### Licensed Premises

**Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were employed in licensed premises in *(a)* 1980, *(b)* 1985, *(c)* 1990 and *(d)* 1994. [23273]

**Mr. Oppenheim:** The information requested is provided in the following table:

*Employees in licensed premises in Great Britain at December of each year*

*Thousands*

| | *1980* | *1985* | *1990* | *1994* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Restaurants, snack bars, cafes etc.[1] | 185 | 221 | 306 | 307 |
| Public houses and bars | 236 | 259 | 338 | 329 |
| Nightclubs and licensed clubs | 136 | 141 | 148 | 136 |
| Hotel trade and tourist accommodation[1,2] | 204 | 221 | 274 | 298 |
| Total[3] | 761 | 841 | 1,066 | 1,070 |

*Source:*
Workforce in Employment survey.
*Notes:*
[1] Includes some unlicensed premises.
[2] In 1994 includes other tourist or short stay accommodation.
[3] Due to rounding totals may not equal sum of component industries.

### Telephones

**Mr. Donohoe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what use his Department makes of hand-held and car-based mobile telephones; what were the costs for each financial year of these services since mobile telephones were first introduced to his Department; and how many mobile telephones are currently in use. [23440]

**Miss Widdecombe** *[holding answer 9 May 1995]:* Within the Department, mobile telephone are used by staff whose duties involve travel away from the office or where personal safety may be compromised by the need to work

in isolated areas. The costs for each financial year for these services and the number of mobile telephones in use could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

**Mr. Donohoe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps his Department has taken to prevent the cloning of telephones being utilised by his Department; and if his Department has discussed this matter with any official agencies. [23498]

**Miss Widdecombe** *[holding answer 9 May 1995]:* The Department has not identified any effective efforts it could make as a service consumer to prevent cloning of mobile telephones. The Department will be raising this matter with CCTA—the Government Centre for Information Systems—to establish what practical steps can be taken.

**Mr. Donohoe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what costs his Department has incurred during the last 12 months as a result of cloning of mobile telephones being utilised by his Department, with particular reference to the making of unauthorised calls. [23480]

**Miss Widdecombe** *[holding answer 9 May 1995]:* There is no evidence to suggest that any charges have been incurred as a result of cloning.

**Mr. Donohoe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many mobile telephones being utilised by his Department have been cloned during the last 12 months. [23504]

**Miss Widdecombe** *[holding answer 9 May 1995]:* There is no evidence to suggest that any of the Department's mobile telephones have been cloned.

**Mr. Donohoe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations his Department has made to the Department of Trade and Industry concerning the need for legislation to prevent the cloning of mobile telephones. [23477]

**Miss Widdecombe** *[holding answer 9 May 1995]:* The Employment Department has made no representations to the Department of Trade and Industry concerning the need for legislation to prevent the cloning of mobile phones.

### Stapro Insecticide

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) for what reasons staff were not evacuated during the spraying of Stapro insecticide at Grays benefit office on 5 October 1991; [22598]

(2) which firm was commissioned to spray Stapro insecticide at Grays benefit office on 5 October 1991; [22599]

(3) pursuant to his answer of 28 April, *Official Report*, column *717*, what are the conditions of approval to which he refers and where they are to be found; and what are the requirements of the consent of use to which he refers and where they are to be found; [22662]

(4) pursuant to his answer of 28 April, *Official Report*, column *717*, if the manner and method of the spraying of the Stapro insecticide at Grays benefit office on 5 October 1991 complied with regulation 4(5) of the Control of Pesticides Regulations 1986. [22663]

**Miss Widdecombe** *[holding answer 10 May 1995]:* Responsibility for the subject of the questions has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given and to keep me informed on progress on this issue.

*Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Andrew Mackinley, dated 11 May 1995:*

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your questions relating to the spraying of an insecticide at Grays Unemployment Benefit Office on 8 October 1991.

My letter to you of 2 May advised that the contractor employed to undertake the spraying was CDR Services of Tiptree, Essex. We were assured that the chemical used could be sprayed whilst the office was occupied and, in accordance with this, the office was not evacuated. The contractor also assured us that he had complied with the manufacturers instructions, which encompass the conditions for use.

I am not in a position, at this time, to provide you with further information on the conditions for use as we have now been informed by the contractor that the chemical sprayed was not Stapro Insecticide. A letter has been sent to the contractor's solicitors seeking details of the chemical used, which will enable me to provide the information you seek.

I will write to you again as soon as I have received the solicitor's reply.

**Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to the answer of 2 May, *Official Report*, column *145*, what was the chemical sprayed at the Grays benefit office on 5 October 1991. [22912]

**Miss Widdecombe** *[holding answer 9 May 1995]:* Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given and to keep me informed of progress on this issue.

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The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about to the spraying of an insecticide at Grays Unemployment Benefit Office on 8 October 1991.

My letter to you of 2 May advised that the contractor employed to undertake the spraying (CDR Services of Tiptree, Essex) has now informed us orally that the chemical used was not Stapro Insecticide. A letter has been sent to the contractor's solicitors seeking details of the chemical used.

Given these circumstances, I am unable, for the time being, to provide you with the information you seek. However, I will write to you again as soon as I have received the solicitor's reply.

### Sikhs (Headwear Exemptions)

**Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make it his policy to seek to arrange for an exemption *(a)* throughout the United Kingdom and *(b)* throughout the European Union of the personal protective equipment at work regulations to enable resident Sikhs to wear holy turbans; and if he will make a statement. [23097]

**Mr. Oppenheim** *[holding answer 10 May 1995]:* The European directive on the use of personal protective equipment at work does not permit such an exemption. During the negotiations on this directive, the UK pressed for a derogation which would have allowed an exemption to be granted, but was unsuccessful.

### Disability Employment Advisers

**Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what training and information disability employment advisers and special needs careers advisers receive to enable them to advise people with epilepsy accurately about employment and training. [22843]

**Miss Widdecombe:** The training provided by the Employment Service for disability employment advisers

covers a wide range of disabilities, including epilepsy. From July this year, the training will be enhanced. Training will continue to include information about specific disabilities such as epilepsy, and DEAs will be actively encouraged to develop expertise in dealing with specific disability groups.

The additional skills, knowledge and attitudes required of careers officers dealing with young people with special needs are included in the post graduate diploma in careers guidance. Careers officers must hold this or an equivalent qualification.

## TREASURY

### Exchange Rate

12. **Mr. Spellar:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his Department's policy regarding the exchange rate with the deutschmark. [22237]

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke:** The Government do not have a policy of targeting the exchange rate against the deutschmark or any other currency. The exchange rate is one of the factors that are considered in determining the appropriate stance of monetary policy.

### Structural Adjustment Programmes

13. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proposals he has made to the International Monetary Fund to alleviate the effects of structural adjustment programmes on poor and indebted countries. [22239]

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke:** The Government support the International Monetary Fund's policy on structural adjustment programmes. Adhering to a structural adjustment programme will often require difficult decisions by the country concerned. But we believe it is important that requests for lending by international financial institutions be accompanied by sensible conditions. This is in the interests of the countries concerned. Sound economic policies are needed if countries are to achieve sustainable economic growth. The alternative to structural adjustment is slower growth and worse poverty.

### Domestic Economy

14. **Mr. Gerrard:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the state of the domestic economy. [22240]

**Mr. Kenneth Clarke:** Britain is enjoying sustained economic growth with low inflation, which will lead to higher living standards for all.

### Economic and Monetary Union

16. **Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what submissions he plans to make to the IGC 96 on economic and monetary union. [22242]

25. **Mrs. Bridget Prentice:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what submissions he proposes to make to the IGC 96 on economic and monetary union. [22251]

**Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** The Government do not intend to provide any submission to the 1996 intergovernmental conference on any of the articles or associated protocols relating to economic and monetary union, which are contained in the treaty on European Union, as agreed at Maastricht.

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which countries currently fulfil the Maastricht conditions for economic and monetary union. [19074]

**Mr. Nelson:** The question of which countries meet the Maastricht criteria will be decided by the Council on recommendations from the Commission.

### Value added Tax (Tourism)

17. **Mr. Tyler:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what progress has been made in examining proposals for the harmonisation of value added tax on tourist services throughout the European Union. [22243]

**Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** There are no proposals for the harmonisation of VAT on tourist services throughout the European Union.

### Mortgage Interest Relief at Source

18. **Mrs. Ann Winterton:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on MIRAS. [22244]

**Sir George Young:** Mortgage interest relief helps some 10 million borrowers to buy their own homes at an estimated cost to the Exchequer of £2.8 billion in 1995–96.

### Teachers' Pay

19. **Ms Lynne:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the cost of funding the current teachers' pay award; and what increase in the standard rate of income tax is required to raise this sum. [22245]

**Mr. Aitken:** The cost in England and Wales of the pay award recommended by the school teachers' pay review body is about £294 million. The estimated full year effect, at 1995–96 income levels, of a 1p change in the basic rate of income tax is £1.9 billion.

### Tax Changes

20. **Mr. Sutcliffe:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about recent tax changes. [22246]

**Sir George Young:** I have received a wide range of representations from hon. Members, organisations and individuals about recent tax changes.

### Economic Performance

21. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the performance of the United Kingdom economy in the last two quarters of the 1994–95 12-month period. [22247]

**Mr. Aitken:** Growth is slowing to a more sustainable rate. Public borrowing and unemployment are falling, and inflation remains low. Living standards continue to rise.

### Living Standards

23. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on recent changes in living standards. [22249]

**Sir George Young:** Real personal disposable income is expected to rise by 1½ per cent. this year. This should mean that households will on average be about £5 per week better off after tax and inflation.

### Capital Gains Tax

24. **Mr. Wilkinson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the loss of revenue to Her Majesty's Treasury of the abolition of capital gains tax. [22250]

**Sir George Young:** Receipts from tax on the capital gains of individuals, including trustees, and companies are forecast to be £1,650 million in 1995–96, projected to rise to some £3 billion by the turn of the century. This revenue would be lost if tax on capital gains was abolished. A very significant amount of income tax would also be lost due to behavioural effects as returns were taken as gains rather than as income.

### Capital Gains Tax

**Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the revenue yield in a full year of restricting the annual exempt amount for capital gains tax to relief at *(a)* 25p and *(b)* 20p in the pound; and what would be the yield from abolition of the annual exempt amount for CGT, for both individuals and trusts. [23350]

**Sir George Young** *[holding answer 9 May 1995]:* Under current rules, net chargeable gains below the capital gains tax annual exempt amount are totally exempt from tax. The effects of restricting this relief at the 25 per cent. and 20 per cent. rates are given in the table, based on forecast 1995–96 liabilities. The estimates assume the restriction would only affect individuals with gains above the annual exempt amount and do not allow for any consequential change in their behaviour.

| | *Capital gains tax yield (£ million)* |
|---|---|
| *Restricting the relief to:* | |
| *(a)* 25 per cent. rate | 40 |
| *(b)* 20 per cent. rate | 65 |

It is estimated that the cost of the annual exempt amount in 1995–96 amounts to £300 million. However, consequential behavioural effects could alter the yield from abolition.

All figures exclude tax on gains made by companies, which is included under corporation tax.

**Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish estimates for the revenue cost/yield in a full year of altering the top rate of capital gains tax from 40 per cent. to *(a)* 30 per cent., *(b)* 35 per cent., *(c)* 45 per cent., *(d)* 50 per cent. and *(e)* 55 per cent., and levying the new rate on those with incomes over (i) £27,825, (ii) £30,000, (iii) £40,000, (iv) £50,000, (v) £60,000, (vi) £70,000, (vii) £80,000, (viii) £90,000, (ix) £100,000, (x) £110,000, (xi) £120,000, (xii) £130,000, (xiii) £140,000 and, (xiv) £150,000, and assuming that where the new top rate is lower than 40 per cent., the 40 per cent. band is abolished, and where it is higher, the 40 per cent. band remains in place. [23353]

**Sir George Young** *[holding answer 9 May 1995]:* Estimates for all the requested combinations of top rates and income limits could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Estimated revenue effects for the various top rates and four limits are given below. It has been assumed that capital gains are taxed as if they were the top slice of an individual's income and therefore the limits apply to the total of taxable income and gains. The estimates are based on forecast 1995–96 liabilities and take account of the likely effect of the changes on the volume of disposals in a full year.

*Estimated revenue effects (£ million)*

| | *Top rate of capital gains tax (per cent.)* | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *30* | *35* | *45* | *50* | *55* |
| *Taxable income and gains over:* | | | | | |
| £27,825 | –120 | –55 | +45 | +75 | +100 |
| £50,000 | –130 | –70 | +40 | +70 | +90 |
| £100,000 | –140 | –90 | +30 | +60 | +80 |
| £150,000 | –150 | –110 | +25 | +50 | +70 |

These figures exclude gains made by companies which are included under corporation tax.

**Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the number of individuals with capital gains *(a)* below and *(b)* in excess of the capital gains tax threshold who pay income tax at 40p in the pound. [23355]

**Sir George Young** *[holding answer 9 May 1995]:* It is estimated that 32,500 of the forecast 90,000 capital gains taxpayers with liabilities in 1995–96 will pay income tax at 40p in the pound. However, I regret that reliable estimates are not possible for the number of individuals with net gains below the annual exempt amount.

All figures exclude companies making gains which are charged under corporation tax.

### Inflation

26. **Sir Michael Neubert:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about the latest annual rate of inflation. [22253]

**Mr. Aitken:** The Chancellor receives a variety of representations which reinforce his determination to achieve the Government's objective of permanently low inflation.

**Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the average rate of inflation *(a)* over the past five years and *(b)* between 1974 and 1979; and if he will make a statement. [22392]

**Mr. Nelson:** The average rate of underlying inflation—retail prices index excluding mortgage interest payments—over the past five years was 5 per cent.; between 1974 and 1979 it averaged 14 per cent.

The Government are committed to permanently low inflation. The benefits of low inflation are coming through in healthy growth, based on good export performance, and falling unemployment.

### European Bank Notes

27. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussions he has had about whose head shall appear on common European currency bank notes. [22254]

**Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** Under article 109f(3) of the treaty of European Union the European Monetary Institute is responsible for supervising the technical preparation of ecu banknotes. The EMI has set up a group of national central bank experts to undertake a detailed study. The Chancellor has made it clear to other member states that if the United Kingdom were to participate in a single currency it would attach great importance to the retention of national features on the notes and coins.

Under the UK protocol to the treaty, any decision to seek to join a single currency would be a matter for the UK Government and Parliament.

### Executive Remuneration

**Ms Hodge:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what new proposals he has with regard to executive remuneration in the privatised utilities. [22241]

**Sir George Young:** Remuneration is a matter for the companies and their shareholders. The Greenbury committee is reviewing best practice for companies and we will consider the need for any Government measures, if appropriate, in the light of their conclusions.

### Summit for Social Development

**Ms Corston:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what action he has taken to ensure that the United Kingdom Government complies with the agreement reached at the world summit for social development to institute regular national reviews of economic policies and budgets in respect of the eradication of poverty and the reduction of inequality. [22238]

**Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** The best way to tackle poverty and inequality is by giving people opportunities, promoting wealth creation and helping people back into work. As a result of our policies the average income of all economic groups and family types has risen since we came to office.

### Paymaster General (Targets)

**Mr. Matthew Banks:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish the key targets for 1995–96 for the office of HM Paymaster General. [24047]

**Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** The Paymaster Agency's key targets for 1995–96 are as follows:

*Pensions*

meet targets agreed with customers for responding to correspondence and processing associated amendments

meet quality targets agreed with customers for processing amendments

*Banking*

meet agreed transaction timetables for handling banking transactions

meet agreed quality targets for processing banking service transactions

*APEX*

meet the agreed timetable for sending financial information to the Treasury 95 per cent. of the time and never exceed the timetable by more than one day

*Recovering the full cost of running the agency*

obtain sufficient revenue to cover the full costs of running the agency

*Reducing unit costs*

achieve at least a 10 per cent. reduction in real terms in the average unit cost of paying a pension compared to the previous year

achieve a 5 per cent. improvement in the average unit cost index for banking transactions compared to the previous year.

### Uniforms

**Mr. Dicks:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has had from organisations faced with a retrospective demand from the Inland Revenue for taxes to be paid by employees who have to wear a uniform at their place of work as part of their contract of employment. [23314]

**Sir George Young** *[holding answer 9 May 1995]:* I am not aware of any such representations, other than my hon. Friend's representations, on behalf of employees who have received clothing from their employer.

### Tobacco

**Mr. Barron:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last discussed, and when he next plans to discuss, tobacco taxation with (i) European Union Finance Ministers and (ii) Group of Seven member country Finance Ministers; and if he will make a statement. [22970]

**Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** The Chancellor has not personally discussed tobacco taxation with European Union Finance Ministers. The previous Chancellor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston-upon-Thames (Mr. Lamont), last did so during the discussions leading up to the completion of the single market on 1 January 1993. The subject will be discussed again at the next appropriate meeting of Finance Ministers following publication of the Commission proposals arising from their review of minimum rates of excise duties. We would not normally expect to discuss tobacco taxation in a G7 context.

**Mr. Barron:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his policy in the taxation of tobacco products. [22958]

**Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** Government policy is to set duty rates which are consistent with revenue needs and health of the nation objectives but which also take account of industry and retail business concerns.

**Mr. Barron:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list, for each year since 1965, the yield, in current and in real terms, from tobacco tax; and what is the estimated yield for the current year. [22956]

**Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** The information requested is given in the table.

| | *Total tax £ million* | *Tax in real terms (at 1994–95 prices) £ million* |
|---|---|---|
| 1965–66 | 1,014 | 9,841 |
| 1966–67 | 1,025 | 9,589 |
| 1967–68 | 1,043 | 9,537 |

| | Total tax £ million | Tax in real terms (at 1994–95 prices) £ million |
|---|---|---|
| 1968–69 | 1,104 | 9,568 |
| 1969–70 | 1,142 | 9,413 |
| 1970–71 | 1,142 | 8,775 |
| 1971–72 | 1,125 | 7,912 |
| 1972–73 | 1,185 | 7,782 |
| 1973–74 | 1,266 | 7,528 |
| 1974–75 | 1,526 | 7,697 |
| 1975–76 | 1,889 | 7,646 |
| 1976–77 | 2,112 | 7,416 |
| 1977–78 | 2,334 | 7,189 |
| 1978–79 | 2,739 | 7,789 |
| 1979–80 | 3,096 | 7,603 |
| 1980–81 | 3,467 | 7,320 |
| 1981–82 | 4,166 | 7,889 |
| 1982–83 | 4,224 | 7,470 |
| 1983–84 | 4,628 | 7,820 |
| 1984–85 | 5,019 | 8,073 |
| 1985–86 | 5,383 | 8,174 |
| 1986–87 | 5,747 | 8,457 |
| 1987–88 | 5,772 | 8,168 |
| 1988–89 | 6,035 | 8,057 |
| 1989–90 | 6,105 | 7,560 |
| 1990–91 | 6,783 | 7,658 |
| 1991–92 | 7,769 | 8,374 |
| 1992–93 | 7,588 | 7,928 |
| 1993–94 | 8,133 | 8,355 |
| 1994–95 | 8,980 | 8,977 |

The forecast for tobacco duty receipts in 1995–96 is £7.2 billion.

**Mr. Barron:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current proportion of the purchase price paid in taxation for an average *(a)* packet of 20 cigarettes, *(b)* 250 g of hand-rolling tobacco, *(c)* packet of five cigars, and *(d)* 250 g of pipe tobacco in each country in (i) the European Union and (ii) the Group of Seven. [22967]

**Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** The information for the European Union member states is given in the table. The information requested is not readily available for the Group of Seven countries in the form required.

| | (a) Cigarettes | (b) HRT | (c) Cigars | (d) Pipe |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Austria | 73.67 | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| Belgium | 74.77 | 54.57 | 27.01 | 54.57 |
| Denmark | 84.56 | 56.42 | 30.37 | 92.26 |
| Finland | 75.57 | 66.04 | n/a | n/a |
| France | 74.16 | 72.69 | 45.58 | 63.48 |
| Germany | 71.72 | 54.40 | 18.04 | 38.71 |
| Greece | 72.52 | 72.75 | n/a | 72.76 |
| Ireland | 83.41 | 73.31 | 55.08 | 73.37 |
| Italy | 72.96 | 70.26 | n/a | 69.97 |
| Luxembourg | 63.82 | 42.21 | n/a | 42.21 |
| Netherlands | 71.89 | 61.98 | 19.89 | 65.94 |
| Portugal | 81.70 | 43.79 | n/a | 43.78 |
| Spain | 75.57 | 44.54 | 24.53 | 34.56 |
| Sweden | 69.18 | 61.74 | n/a | n/a |
| UK | 77.59 | 72.65 | 50.42 | 55.11 |

n/a = information not readily available.

**Mr. Barron:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list, for each 5p between 5p and £1, his estimate of the revenue raised by an increase in excise duty on an average *(a)* packet of cigarettes, *(b)* 250 g of hand-rolling tobacco, *(c)* packet of five cigars and *(d)* 250 g of pipe tobacco, if such increases were to be fully reflected in price. [22959]

**Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** The information is as follows:

| | Revenue £ million | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pence | Cigarettes 20 king size | Cigars five small cigars | Hand rolling 250g | Pipe 250g |
| 5 | 235 | 8 | 1 | 0 |
| 10 | 470 | 16 | 1 | 1 |
| 15 | 705 | 23 | 2 | 1 |
| 20 | 940 | 31 | 2 | 1 |
| 25 | 1175 | 39 | 3 | 2 |
| 30 | 1410 | 47 | 3 | 2 |
| 35 | 1645 | 55 | 4 | 2 |
| 40 | 1880 | 62 | 4 | 2 |
| 45 | 2115 | 70 | 5 | 3 |
| 50 | 2351 | 78 | 6 | 3 |
| 55 | 2586 | 86 | 6 | 3 |
| 60 | 2831 | 94 | 7 | 4 |
| 65 | 3056 | 101 | 7 | 4 |
| 70 | 3291 | 109 | 8 | 4 |
| 75 | 3526 | 117 | 8 | 5 |
| 80 | 3761 | 125 | 9 | 5 |
| 85 | 3996 | 133 | 9 | 5 |
| 90 | 4231 | 140 | 10 | 5 |
| 95 | 4466 | 148 | 10 | 6 |
| 100 | 4701 | 156 | 11 | 6 |

**Mr. Barron:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the amount in sterling equivalent and/or percentage rate of levied on an average packet of 20 cigarettes in *(a)* specific excise duty, *(b)* at valorem excise duty and *(c)* VAT or other sales tax in each country in (i) the European Union and (ii) the Group of seven including the United Kingdom. [22965]

**Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** The information is as follows:

| | | Specific duty £ per 20 | Ad valorem (per cent.) | VAT rate (per cent.) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Austria | | 0.30 | 41.00 | 20.00 |
| Belgium | | 0.16 | 50.00 | 20.50 |
| Denmark | | 1.39 | 21.22 | 25.00 |
| Finland | | 0.22 | 50.00 | 22.00 |
| France | | 0.08 | 54.95 | 18.60 |
| Germany | | 0.75 | 24.80 | 15.00 |
| Greece | | 0.05 | 53.86 | 18.00 |
| Ireland | | 1.16 | 16.82 | 21.00 |
| Italy | | 0.04 | 53.35 | 19.00 |
| Luxembourg | | 0.05 | 54.50 | 12.00 |
| Holland | | 0.65 | 21.05 | 17.50 |
| Portugal | | 0.12 | 56.00 | 16.00 |
| Spain | | 0.04 | 50.00 | 15.00 |
| Sweden | | 1.28 | 0.00 | 25.00 |
| UK | | 1.15 | 20.00 | 17.50 |
| US | high | 0.48 | — | — |
| | low | 0.17 | — | — |
| Canada | high | 1.85 | — | — |
| | low | 0.60 | — | — |
| Japan | | 0.93 | — | 3.00 |

For the United States and Canada, tax rates vary considerably between states. For these countries, the specific duty column shows the total tax burden.

**Mr. Barron:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the loss to the Treasury in uncollectable revenue from *(a)* tobacco, *(b)* beer, *(c)* wine and *(d)* spirits in (i) duty and (ii) VAT from overseas mail order arrangements for selling through a personal agent; and if he will make a statement. [22963]

**Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** The duty receipts for the financial year 1994–95 are as follows:

| | *£ billion* |
|---|---|
| Tobacco | 7.4 |
| Beer | 2.5 |
| Wine | 1.1 |
| Spirits | 1.8 |

The quantities that might be purchased through a personal agent are unknown. Any figure would therefore be wholly speculative.

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# PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

## OFFICIAL REPORT

**SIXTH SERIES** **VOLUME 259**

SESSION 1994–95

*1st May—11th May 1995*

## SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc., between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes and cannot therefore, be used in connection with the daily part or weekly Hansard. For these versions use the Fortnightly Index.

### *Scope and arrangement of the Index*

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There are, however, the headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one can find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instruments etc, under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Speaker and deputies are brought together under the heading 'Speaker's rulings and statements'.

Other contributions by Speaker and deputies appear under the heading Speaker.

Opposition Day Debates and Estimates Day Debates and Standing Order No. 10 applications are listed under those respective headings and under subject headings too.

The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates, etc.* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions.*

### *Abbreviations*

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